

SEPTEMBER

THE

15 CENTS

ARGOSY

One~ Cylinder Sam

by

E.J. Rath

Author of
"The Man With the
44 Chest"

COMPLETE
IN THIS
ISSUE

MODEST STEIN



"Roll Your Own!"

A fresh, hand-rolled cigarette of "Bull" Durham makes a smoke that's as lively and brisk as a pure-ivory billiard ball. "Bull" Durham has the alert, healthy, youthful taste—the snap and sparkle that give the "punch" to a cigarette. That's why thousands more smokers have become "roll your own" enthusiasts in the last few years.

GENUINE "BULL" DURHAM SMOKING TOBACCO

No other tobacco has the unique, mellow-sweet mildness and the delightful aromatic flavor of "Bull" Durham. Made exclusively from mild, ripe Virginia-North Carolina "bright" tobacco leaf, "Bull" Durham has that distinctive quality

which has made it the favorite smoke of three generations.

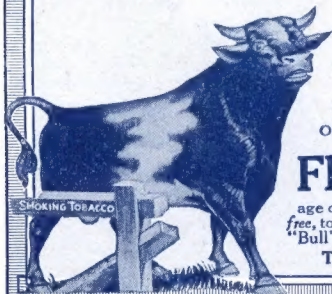
"Roll your own" cigarette with "Bull" Durham and get more genuine satisfaction out of smoking.

FREE

An Illustrated Booklet, showing correct way to "Roll Your Own" Cigarettes, and a package of cigarette papers, will both be mailed, free, to any address in U. S. on request. Address "Bull" Durham, Durham, N. C. Room 1123.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO CO.

Ask for **FREE** package of "papers" with each 5c sack



Missing Page

Ads

Missing Page

The Argosy [v80 #2, September 1915] (The Frank A. Munsey Company, 15¢, pulp, cover by Modest Stein) []

225 · One-Cylinder Sam · E. J. Rath · n.

344 · An Officer and—a Cur · Robert Rossow · ss

350 · A \$1,000 Night [Part 1 of 2] · Rudolph R. Krebs · sl

382 · Brine in the Blood · Captain A. E. Dingle · ss

395 · The Padded Sell · George Armstrong · ss

400 · The Desert Crucible [Part 5 of 5] · Zane Grey · n.

421 · Miss O'Flannaghan's Romance · Bonita Carroll · ss

426 · The Sneeze Play · Will H. Greenfield · ss

431 · Luck of the Devil · Bob Strang · ss

436 · The Blindness of Justice · Tom S. Elrod · ss

444 · The Log-Book · The Editor · cl

A \$1,000

THE DESER

AN OFFICER AND—A CORP

BRINE IN THE BLOOD.....

THE PADDED SELL.....

MISS O'FLANNAGHAN'S ROMANCE.....

THE SNEEZE PLAY.....WILL

LUCK OF THE DEVIL.....BOB SIKK

THE BLINDNESS OF JUSTICE.....TOM S. ELROD 436

THE LOG-BOOK.....THE EDITOR 444

A GREAT OCTOBER ARGOSY

A wonder of a book-length novel, in twenty-six chapters, complete:

***TOO TERRIBLE FOR WAR*, by Seward W. Hopkins.**

The first eleven chapters of a thrilling three-part story:

***THE DIAMOND NECKLACE*, by Fred Jackson.**

A captivating novelette of Western romance, in nine chapters, complete:

***BUCKSKIN BEAUTY*, by Katharine Eggleston.**

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 8 West Fortieth Street, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C. London

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 15 cents. By the year, \$1.50 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$2.00 to Canada, and \$2.50 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

ISSUED MONTHLY. COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

on self-
as, etc. Send
expressage on
ept. 902, Chicago.

JUM SPECIALTIES and
me. General Sales Course
quick, American Aluminum
Ill.

AGENTS MAKE 500 PER
Novelty Sign Cards. Merchants
nt. 800 varieties. Catalogue Free.
w. Van Buren Street, Chicago, Ill.

RELIABLE MEN AND WOMEN to place our
in stores and appoint sub-agents. Takes the place of
in baking and cooking at less than 9c a dozen.
Chas. Morrissey Co., A, 4419-25 Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS Make Large Profits with our absolute household
necessity. Great opportunity to become our permanent represent-
ative. Send for book "Big Sales and Big Profits." Commercial
Opportunities Co., A3 Permanent Title Building, Akron, Ohio.

WANTED: HUSTLERS TO TAKE ORDERS for Made-to-
Measure high grade men's tailored suits from \$9.00 to \$22.00.
Make \$25.00 to \$50.00 weekly. Elegant large book outfit
free. Experience unnecessary. No pocket folder affair. Splen-
did opportunity to make money. Handy Dandy Line,
Dept. K, Sangamon Street, Chicago.

GREATEST STUNT EVER SPRUNG ON THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE. You give free gold monogram
dinner set coupon with every sale of "Lucky Leven" and
our other sensational soap and toilet combinations. \$5 to
\$10 daily, easy. Crew managers double that. Repeat orders
galore! World's largest factory backs you. Write for ap-
pointment. E. M. Davis, Pres., K-22 Davis Bldg., Chicago.

AGENTS—500% PROFIT. Free Sample Gold and Silver Sign
Letters for store fronts and office windows. Anyone can put
on. Big demand everywhere. Write today for liberal offer to
agents. Metallic Letter Co., 409 N. Clark, Chicago, U. S. A.

\$250 FOR RELIABLE MAN OR WOMAN: DISTRIBUTE
2000 Free Packages Borax Powder with Soaps, etc., in your
town. No money or experience needed. S. Ward Co., 208
Institute, Chicago.

AGENTS—\$1200 TO \$1500 A YEAR SURE. Permanent
position assured. Exclusive territory. We teach the inexperienced
how to succeed. Let's show you. Novelty Cutlery Company,
77 Bar Street, Canton, O.

AGENTS—\$300.00 EVERY MONTH Selling Our Wonderful
7-Piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of \$12.00
daily profit. Outfit free to workers. 1200 other fast sellers.
Thomas Mfg. Co., 307 North Street, Dayton, Ohio.

GET NEW ONE. EVANS OUT-DOOR REEL COMPLETE.
bolts, pulleys, hooks, etc. Best ever. Tons of money made
selling this new device. Buy direct. Sample \$1. Information with
sample order. Evans Manufacturing, 610 S. Dearborn St., Chicago.

YOUNG MAN, would you accept a tailor-made suit just
for showing it to your friends? If you live in a town smaller
than 10,000, write Banner Tailoring Co., Dept. 104, Chicago,
and get beautiful samples, styles and a wonderful offer.

**SALESMEN: POCKET SIDE LINE. NEW LIVE PRO-
POSITION,** all merchants in towns of 100,000 and under want it.
Pays \$5.00 commission on each sale. No collecting, no
risk to merchant. We take back unsold goods. Easiest,
biggest paying side line ever offered. Canfield Mfg. Co.,
208 Sigel Street, Chicago.

FOR MEN AND WOMEN

**MEN—BUY YOUR HATS DIRECT FROM THE MANU-
FACTURERS.** Send for style book. Some choice territory
open for agents. Big money. Guerin Bros., Hat Manufacturers,
Dept. 7, Orange, N. J.

\$20 TO \$35 PER MONTH EXTRA MONEY to any
employed person without interfering with regular work. No
selling. No canvassing. Positively no investment. Unemployed
need not apply. Address The Silver-Mirror Co., Inc., 121
W. Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

. Y.

WANTED TO LAST
agents' proposition.
on, Ohio.

ES, Furnishing Everything:
\$200.00 weekly operating our
"Landy Factories," home or small
canvassing. Opportunity lifetime; booklet
Drawer 92, East Orange, N. J.

PAIR SILK HOSE FREE. State size and color.
line direct from mill. Good profits. Write to-day.
Mantle Mills, Dept. H-5, 720 Chestnut Street, Phila., Pa.

AGENTS WANTED TO SOLICIT ORDERS FOR MEN'S
CLOTHES from factory direct to wearer at wholesale
prices; reference required. P. O. Box 522, Philadelphia, Pa.

FREE SAMPLE—NOSPLASH WATER STRAINERS
SELL THEMSELVES. No talking—experience unnecessary.
Daily profits \$5 upwards. Send 2c (mailing cost). L. K. D.
Union Filter Co., New York.

Let us start you in a permanent business of your own, selling
guaranteed Planto-Silk Hosiery and Made-to-Measure Under-
wear direct from factory to the homes; capital and experience
not necessary. Our representatives are making \$3,000 to \$5,000
per year. Write for particulars to Malloch Knitting Mills,
A1076 Grandville Avenue, Grand Rapids, Mich.

High Grade Men and Women to sell new Luminous Novelties
that show plainly in the dark. Intense interest created; makes
ready sales to merchants and homes. Large profits. Samples
free. The Necessity Novelty Co., Westminster Bldg., Chicago.

MAN OR WOMAN OF GOOD CHARACTER IN EACH
TOWN to distribute free goods as advertising. Experience
unnecessary. References required. \$15 a week to start.
Address Hudson King & Co., Dept. 1, 9 South Clinton
Street, Chicago.

AGENTS—SNAPPIEST HOUSEHOLD LINE ON EARTH.
Red Hot Sellers, steady repeaters. Goods guaranteed. Over
100% profit. Write quick—hurry. E. M. Feltman, Sales Mgr.,
500 Third Street, Cincinnati, O.

Every Household On Farm in small town or suburbs, where
oil lamps are used, needs and will buy the wonderful Aladdin
Mantle Lamp; burns common coal oil (kerosene); gives a light
five times as bright as electric. One farmer cleared over \$500
in six weeks; hundreds with rigs earning \$100 to \$300 per
month. No cash required. We furnish capital to reliable men.
Write quick for wholesale prices, territory and sample lamp for
free trial. Mantle Lamp Co., 857 Aladdin Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

BIG TEXTILE MILLS will employ everywhere reliable
people to take orders for dress fabrics, hosiery, underwear
and neckwear from samples. Factory prices. Spare or all
time. No experience. Permanent. Many making over \$30.00
weekly. Steadfast Mills, 78 Remsen Street, Cohoes, N. Y.

AGENTS: HERE IS A MONEY-GETTER. Ideal Ironing
Board Clips; latest out; no tacks; no pins; no sewing.
Send 25c for a set. Address Ideal Mfg. Co., 2018 Miami St.,
South Bend, Ind., Dept. E.

HELP WANTED

BE A DETECTIVE—EARN \$150.00 TO \$300.00 MONTHLY. Easy work; we show you; open to all; experience unnecessary. Full particulars mailed to you. Write Wagner, 1243 Lexington Avenue, New York, Department 111.

MEN OF IDEAS AND INVENTIVE ABILITY should write for new "Lists of Needed Inventions," Patent Buyers, and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Advice free. Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 40, Washington, D. C.

LADIES—MAKE SHIELDS AT HOME, \$10 PER 100; no canvassing required. Send stamped-addressed envelope for particulars. Eureka Co., Dept. 41, Kalamazoo, Mich.

I CONDUCTED GOVERNMENT EXAMINATIONS—Can help you secure Railway Mail or other Government Positions. Trial Examination Free. Ozment, 124R, St. Louis.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS—PAY BIG MONEY. Examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former United States Civil Service Examiner. 64 page booklet free. Write to-day. Patterson Civil Service School, Box 1403, Rochester, N. Y.

MEN AND WOMEN WANTED EVERYWHERE. Government Jobs. \$70 month. Short hours. Vacations. Rapid advancement. Steady work. Write immediately for list of positions now obtainable. Franklin Institute, Dept. A-1, Rochester, N. Y.

SHORTHAND IN 30 DAYS—Syllabic System—written with only nine characters. No "positions"—no "ruled lines"—no "shading"—no "word-signs"—no "cold notes." Speedy, practical. Descriptive matter free. Chicago Correspondence Schools, 960 Unity Building, Chicago, Ill.

BE A DETECTIVE.—EARN FROM \$150.00 TO \$300.00 PER MONTH. Travel over the world. Write C. T. Ludwig, 126 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

ADVERTISERS, MAIL DEALERS, Our 1915 Rate Book lists 2000 Principal Publications, rates, circulation. Includes 20 Mail Order Plans. Price 10c. Dearborn Advertising Agency, 222 Franklin Building, Chicago, Ill.

GAMES AND ENTERTAINMENTS

CACHOO (Joke Sneeze Powder) 10c; 18 for \$1; Chicken Inspector Badge 10c; 30 varieties Fine Jute Wigs at 75c each; Mustaches 35c; Full Beards 75c, \$1.25, \$2.50; Negro Wig 50c; Box Grease Paints 35c. Cat. Free. Percy Ewing, Decatur, Ill.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

WRITE MOVING PICTURE PLAYS: \$10 to \$100 each. Constant demand. Devote all or spare time. No correspondence course. Start work at once. Free details tell all, answer every question. Atlas Publishing Co., 316 Atlas Bldg., Cincinnati O.

TYPEWRITERS

Largest Stock of Typewriters in America—All makes; rebuilt; Underwoods, Oliviers, Remingtons, etc., one-fourth to one-half "nfrs." prices, \$15 up, rented anywhere, applying rent on price; free trial; installment payments if desired. Write for catalogue 73. Typewriter Emporium (Est. 1892), 34-36 W. Lake St., Chicago.

GENUINE TYPEWRITER BARGAINS: no matter what make, will quote you lowest prices and easiest terms, or rent, allowing rental on price. Write for big bargain list and catalogue 16. L. J. Peabody, 286 Devonshire St., Boston, Mass.

TYPEWRITER PRICES SMASHED. Spot Cash Offer will save you money. Rebuilt L. C. Smiths, Oliviers, Remingtons, Underwoods and Royals; your choice of 500 machines at \$10 to \$15. Guaranteed for 3 years. Send today for descriptive circular. Dearborn Typewriter Exchange, Dept. 36, Chicago, Ill.

TYPEWRITERS, ALL MAKES, FACTORY-REBUILT by famous "Young Process." Look like new, wear like new, guaranteed like new. Our big business insures "Square Deal" and permits lowest cash prices—\$10 and up. Also, machines rented—or sold on time. No matter what your needs are, we can best serve you. Write and see—now. Young Typewriter Company, Department 188, Chicago.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. ADVICE AND BOOKS FREE. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for search. Watson E. Coleman, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS AND COPYRIGHTS. Our hand book on patents will be sent free on request. All patents secured through us are described without cost to the patentee in the Scientific American. Munn & Co., Patent Attorneys, 681 Woolworth Building, New York. Washington Office, 625 F Street, Washington, D. C.

"PRIZES FOR PATENTS," "MONEY IN PATENTS," "How To Get Your Patents and Money," "Why Some Inventors Fail," "Needed Inventions." Sent free. Randolph & Co., 629 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENT YOUR IDEAS—\$9,000 OFFERED FOR CERTAIN INVENTIONS. Book, "How to Obtain a Patent," and "What to Invent," sent free. Send rough sketch for free report as to patentability. We advertise your patent for sale at our expense. Established sixteen years. Address Chandlee & Chandlee, Patent Attorneys, 926 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Send sketch for free search. Our four books sent free. How to Obtain Patent and What to Invent with List of Inventions Wanted and \$1,000,000 in Prizes Offered for Inventions. Patents advertised Free. Wanted New Ideas. Send for list of Patent Buyers. Victor J. Evans & Co., 756 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—TRADE-MARKS. Send for my free book "How to Get Them." It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago; 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia; 895 G St., Washington.

IDEAS WANTED—MANUFACTURERS ARE WRITING FOR PATENTS procured through me. Three books with list 200 inventions wanted sent free. Advice Free. I get patent or no fee. R. B. Owen, 68 Owen Building, Washington, D. C.

REAL ESTATE—FARM LANDS

MISSISSIPPI

IS HE CRAZY? The owner of a plantation in Mississippi is giving away a few five-acre tracts. The only condition is that flags be planted. The owner wants enough flags raised to supply a Canning Factory. You can secure five acres and an interest in the Factory by writing Eubank Farms Company, 733 Keystone, Pittsburgh, Pa. They will plant and care for your trees for \$6 per month. Your profit should be \$1,000 per year. Some think this man is crazy for giving away such valuable land, but there may be method in his madness.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

\$4.25 PAID FOR FLYING EAGLE CENTS dated 1856. We pay a cash premium on hundreds of old coins. Send 10c at once for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x7. It may mean your fortune. Clarke & Co., Coin Dealers, Box 101, Le Roy, N. Y.

\$50.00 PAID For Dollar 1873 S. Mint; \$2.00 For 1904 Proof Dollars; \$7.00 For 1853 Quarters, no arrows, etc. Watch your change. Many valuable coins circulating. Get posted. It may mean large profits to you. Send only 4c for Large Illus. Coin Circular. Send to Numismatic Bank, Dept. M, Fort Worth, Tex.

RAZORS & DULL RAZOR BLADES

ANY MAKE, RESHARPENED, every blade honed, stropped, sterilized, hair-tested. Sharp Keen Cutting Edge positively guaranteed. 30c dozen. Pay when blades are found O. K. Easy mailing wrapper free. Our eighth year in business. Keenedge Co. (Inc.), 305 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. J, Chicago.

Safety Razor Blades Resharpened by our "New Process," 2c each. Guaranteed better than when new. Each Blade Honed, Hair-Tested, Sterilized, and Wrapped Individually. Mailing envelopes Free. Jones Keenedge Co., Jamaica Plain, Mass.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"JONPHO QUALITY." Developing, Printing, Enlarging. Send negative for Sample Print and Booklet. Developing 10c roll. Velox Prints 24x33, 3c; 8x10 Enlargements 25c, unmounted. Jones Photo Co., P. O. Box 1984, Boston, Mass.

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

An all-fiction publication filled from cover to cover with stories of real human interest—tales of love, daring and humor. The All-Story has the real grip on the reading that you've been looking for. Buy the current number and be convinced. **10 cents—at all news-stands.**

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

8 WEST FORTIETH STREET,

NEW YORK, N. Y.



EARN \$2,000 TO \$10,000 A YEAR

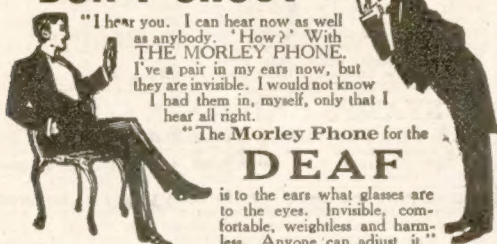
We will teach you to be a high grade salesman, in eight weeks at home and assure you definite proposition from a large number of reliable firms who offer our students opportunities to earn Big Pay while they are learning. No former experience required. Write today for particulars, list of hundreds of good openings and testimonials from hundreds of our students now earning \$100 to \$500 a month. Address nearest Office. Dept. 500 **NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSN.** Chicago New York San Francisco

LAW BOOK FREE

Read our 80-page book before enrolling for any law course. Tells how to judge claims of correspondence schools, and explains the American School's simple method of law instruction. Prepared by 56 legal authorities—28 more subjects and 30 more authors than any other correspondence law course. 15 volume Law Library, 60 Text Books, and 36 Case Books furnished every student. Send for your free book today.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE
Dept. 1076, Drexel Avenue and 58th Street, Chicago, U. S. A.

"DON'T SHOUT"



Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials. **THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 752, Perry Bldg., Phila.**

LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS

In this most fascinating and profitable work. Will show you how by correspondence. Facts free. Write now. **PAGE-DAVIS CO., 941 Page Bldg., Chicago, Ill.**

LEARN JEWELERS' ENGRAVING
A high salaried and learned trade, taught thoroughly by mail. We will teach the beginner better engraving than he can gain in years of rigid apprenticeship. We will also improve the skill of any engraver. Send for our catalog. **THE ENGRAVING SCHOOL, 941 Page Bldg., Chicago, Ill.**

YOU CAN WRITE A PICTURE PLAY OR SHORT STORY. Beginners learn thoroughly under our perfect method. We help those who want to sell their stories. Write for particulars. **SCHOOL OF SHORT-STORY WRITING, Dept. 941, Page Bldg., Chicago.**

BE AN ILLUSTRATOR
Learn to Draw. We will teach you by mail how to draw for magazines and newspapers. Send for Catalog.

SCHOOL OF ILLUSTRATION,
941 Page Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

More Than \$300 a Month

A Draftsman writes: "I have made more than \$300 a month." He learned practical drafting in his own home. He got my personal instruction. I am Chief Draftsman of a large company and know the training you must have. Write for free book.

Draftsmen Are Needed

Every day calls are issued for more draftsmen. In all lines of business skilled draftsmen are in demand. Big salaries are offered. You can get a big job.

Free \$15.00 Outfit

I give my students a complete set of genuine working instruments absolutely free. Just the kind of instruments I use myself. They never cost you a penny on this offer.

Write Today Send me your name and address on post card or a letter for free book on drafting. No obligations. Write today.

Chief Draftsman Dobe Engineer's Equipment Co., Inc. Div. 1076 Chicago, Ill.

COPY THIS SKETCH

and let me see what you can do with it. Illustrators and cartoonists earn from \$20 to \$25 a week or more. My practical system of personal individual lessons by mail will develop your talent. Fifteen years successful work for newspapers and magazines qualifies me to teach you. Send me your sketch of President Wilson with 5c in stamps and I will send you a test lesson plate, also collection of drawings showing possibilities for YOU.

The Landon School of Illustrating and Cartooning
1429 SCHOFIELD BUILDING, CLEVELAND, O.



GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

offer employment for life at salary ranging from \$800 to \$1800 per year with short hours under pleasant conditions and no fear of "lay-offs" or strikes. American citizens 18 or over are eligible. Our 64-page booklet contains list of positions, requirements, etc., and tells how you can prepare for "Exams" under the personal supervision of a former U. S. Civil Service Secretary-Examiner. Booklet is FREE, without obligation. Write to-day.

PATTERSON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL
229 Livingston Bldg. Rochester, N. Y.



Men Are Needed

Yesterday a new profession was born. The transportation of merchandise at minimum cost is one of the great problems of modern business. Skilled men are needed everywhere. You can get just the training that you need.

Traffic Experts Draw Big Salaries

From \$1,500 to \$10,000 a year are the kind of salaries traffic men make. You can be one of them. Our profession needs ambitious men. Write today.

Write Today for Big Traffic Book

Find out about the golden opportunities in our profession. The big traffic book explains all. It's free. Your name and address is enough. Write now.

INTERSTATE TRAFFIC SCHOOL, Dept. 1076, FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

DRAWING

Learn by mail in your own home. Cartooning, Newspaper, Magazine and Commercial Illustrating, also

Water-Color and Oil Painting

Learn Drawing or Painting for profit and pleasure. We can develop your talent. This school has taught thousands. Free Scholarship Award—special limited offer. Your name and address brings you full explanation and our handsome illustrated Art Annual by return mail. Don't delay. Write today.

FINE ARTS INSTITUTE, Studio 366, Omaha, Neb.



LEARN TO PAINT SIGNS and SHOW CARDS

I'll teach you personally by mail. 16 years' successful teaching. Big field for men and women. You can earn \$18.00 to \$45.00 A WEEK. Crawford, B. C., writes: "Earned \$200.00 while taking course." Write today for catalog, samples, etc.

DETROIT SCHOOL OF LETTERING
Chas. J. Strong, Founder Dept. 409, Detroit, Mich.



BE A SIGNAL ENGINEER \$125-\$300 A MONTH

Write at once. Most wonderful opportunity for the ambitious man. Railroad need hundreds of Signal

Engineers—will pay Big Money. We will teach you right at home to be expert. Special offer if you write at once. Two big outfits free. Do practical work while learning. Catalog and full particulars.

DEPARTMENT OF SIGNALING
Room 1076 1810 Wilson Ave. Ravenswood Station Chicago, Ill.



\$100 Typewriters \$9.50 and Up

Underwoods, Smiths, Remingtons, Oliverts, at cut-rate prices. 500 Typewriters at \$12.50. Guaranteed 5 years with exchange privilege. Anybody who can read and write can operate a typewriter. Write for Free Trial Offer.

A-M Mfg. Co., Desk B, 162 N. Dearborn St., Chicago

BOOK FREE

Learn how you can become an Electrical Engineer and earn \$150 to \$250 monthly. No experience necessary. We easily train you in your spare time to enter this fascinating work. Demand for electrical experts exceeds the supply—decide to fit yourself for one of these well-paid jobs. 56-page book, which tells you how to do it, sent FREE.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE
Dept. 1076, Drexel Ave. and 58th Street, Chicago, U. S. A.

SPECIAL

ONLY \$12.75



**EASY
TERMS**

**30 Days
FREE
TRIAL!**

Standard of the World. Endorsed by Government and Railway Officials. Goar's enlarged easy credit plan enables you to own one of these superb Elgin Watches now.

17-Jewel Elgin!

Now, during this Special Sale, is the time to buy this elegant 17-Jewel Elgin. Thoroughly factory tested, fitted in a beautiful Gold Strata case, factory stamped and guaranteed 25 years, hand engraved, plain polished or with your own monogram, and our startling offer is to send you this celebrated 1915 Model free of charge for your inspection and approval.

No Money Down

Because we want to prove to you that the great volume of our business actually enables us to do better by you than any other watch or diamond house in the world and that on this particular watch, we save you nearly half, for it sells regularly at \$20 to \$22, while our

Special Price is only \$12.75

We don't want you to send one cent. Not a penny. Merely give us your full name and address that we may send you this superb 17-Jewel Elgin on approval, and if after you receive it and want to keep it, then we ask you to pay us the small sum of

Only \$2 a Month But, if after you have worn it 30 days free and don't want to keep it, send it back at our expense. You assume no risk whatever. You do not buy or pay one cent until we have placed the watch right in your own hands for

your own decision. We want no security, no interest, no red tape—just common honesty among men.

3 Fine Books FREE!

MR. HARRIS wants to send you his three latest BOOKS FREE—one the story of "THE DIAMOND," its discovery, where and how mined, cut and marketed, the other "FACTS vs FUNK" or all about the watch business, both at home and abroad; also our Big Free Illustrated WATCH and DIAMOND BOOK. Write today—Do it now!



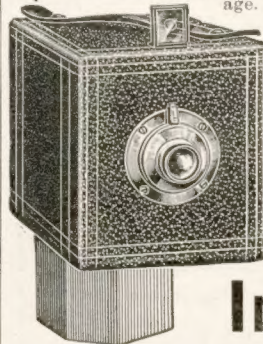
HARRIS-GOAR CO. Department 1702
Kansas City, Mo.

The House that Sells More Elgin Watches than Any Other Firm in the World.

No Money In Advance

This Marvelous CAMERA On FREE Trial!

Only 10,000 of these marvelous, instantaneous picture-taking and making cameras to be sent out absolutely on approval without a penny in advance just to prove that it is the most wonderful invention—the camera sensation of the age. So you must send for it quick! Just think of it—the new Mandel-ette.



**TAKES
AND
MAKES
Finished
Pictures
Instantly**

You press the button, drop card in developer and in one minute take out a perfect, finished post card photo 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches in size. Camera, itself, is about 4 1/2 x 5 x 7 inches. Loads in daylight, 16 to 50 post cards at one time.

No Films—No Plates—No Dark Room

Not a bit of the muss and bother of the ordinary kodak or camera. It is instantaneous photography. Universal focus lens produces sharp pictures at all distances. Pictures develop and print automatically. Can't over-develop; results simply amazing.

We Trust You

No difference who you are or where you live we will send you the complete Mandel-ette outfit absolutely on approval and give you ten days to test it. If not satisfactory return it. If you wish to keep it simply pay One Dollar on arrival, and One Dollar per month until our special price of only Five Dollars is paid. When you see what elegant pictures it takes—so quick, so easy, with no trouble at all—you'll be surprised.

Easy Payments—No References

No red tape of any kind. Monthly payments so small you'll not notice them. Lots of fun and big profits.

No Experience Required

Plain instructions and everything complete with outfit so you can begin taking pictures the moment it arrives. We guarantee that even a child can operate it. Mail coupon right now. No risk or obligation to keep camera.

—The Chicago Ferrottype Co.—

Desk 121, Ferrottype Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Send me at once one complete model Mandel-ette Camera outfit including supply of post cards and instructions. I agree to pay One Dollar when Camera arrives, examine and test it thoroughly and if satisfied keep it and pay you One Dollar a month until your special price of Five Dollars is paid. Otherwise I will return it at the end of ten days.

Name.....

St. and No.....

Town..... State.....

Hidden Factors of Service



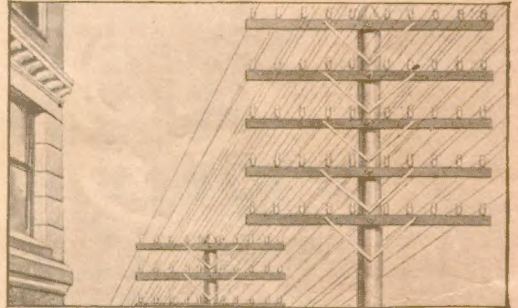
Records kept like this are practically useless for the management of a business. Efficiency is impossible and funds for improvement cannot be obtained.



Such methods result in a telephone line which can give only poor service.



Records, statistics and accounts kept like this are available for a complete knowledge of the cost and efficiency of each department of the business.



The result of such records is a telephone line like this, which gives good service.



The subscriber knows the difference! He demands a well-informed, intelligent business management.



**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

One Policy

One System

Universal Service

THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXXX

SEPTEMBER, 1915

No. 2

One-Cylinder Sam



by E. J. Rath

Author of "The Man with the 44 Chest," "The Flying Courtship,"
"Kismet Isle," "Two Women or One," etc.

A FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE.

CHAPTER I.

SAM, THE BOAT PERSON.

MISS CHALMERS stood on the wharf at Clayton, poised upon one foot, while she employed the other in executing alternate taps, denoting impatience, and vigorous stamping, by which she registered rage. Even the half-grown boy who volunteered to find her a boatman knew that she was angry.

Her free foot beat upon the rough flooring of the wharf with increasing vigor. The wharf did not care; it was

old and stout, and did not pretend to be ornamental.

Miss Chalmers's shoe might have protested, had it possessed a voice, for it was new and spotless, and of delicate constitution. With its mate, it had cost Miss Chalmers twenty dollars, a fact which is set down to obviate the necessity of describing what else the lady wore. Her whole costume was in complete financial and artistic harmony with its twenty-dollar-shoe foundation.

It was dark and clear and warm—somewhat after nine o'clock of an

August night. There were gleams of light upon the St. Lawrence, some in motion, some merely shimmering restlessly as they lay fixed upon the rippling surface. It was an evening for poetry and romance and beauty—if only the last steamer had not departed.

The boy came back and confirmed his previous impression that no other boat would stop that night at Witherbee's Island.

"It's absurd—inexcusable!" exclaimed Miss Chalmers sharply.

"Yes, ma'am," said the boy.

"How am I to get there, then? Well? Answer!"

"I got a man who'll take you."

"Where is he?"

"Down that way," replied the boy, nodding his head toward the end of the wharf.

"A reliable man?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You know him?"

"No, ma'am."

Miss Chalmers stamped her foot again.

"How can you say he's reliable if you don't know him?" she demanded so imperatively that the boy winced and shuffled his feet.

"Well, he's got a power-boat, and his name's Sam," said the boy defensively. "He ain't ever been wrecked's fur as I know."

Miss Chalmers made an eloquent and helpless gesture with both arms, then surveyed her light field-equipment—six trunks and a grip.

"Show me the man," she spoke abruptly.

The boy made off in haste, with Miss Chalmers at his heels. He led the way among bales and boxes and barrels, stopping presently under a dim oil lantern set upon a post.

On the string-piece of the wharf sat a man, smoking a pipe. He looked up at Miss Chalmers casually, yet speculatively, then arose and nodded amicably.

"Looking for me?" he asked.

Miss Chalmers was annoyed at the

phrasing; never yet had she "looked for" a man. But she swallowed her annoyance.

"I must go to Mr. Stephen Witherbee's island—to-night," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You know where it is?"

"Oh, yes!"

"How far is it?"

"Something like fifteen miles."

"Can you take me there at once?"

"Well," said the man, removing his pipe from his mouth and regarding Miss Chalmers with solemn interest, "it all depends on what you call 'at once.' I can take you there, but I'm no speed-king."

"Take me, then!" exclaimed Miss Chalmers. "And get my trunks."

The man went up the wharf at a leisurely gait, accompanied by the boy. Almost immediately the boy came back.

"He says he can't take all them trunks, and for you to pick out two."

Miss Chalmers strode back to her trunks with no improvement of temper. She found the boatman surveying them placidly.

"Which is the emergency-kit?" he asked pleasantly. "I'm not running a freighter, ma'am."

"They've all got to go—every one!"

The man shook his head doubtfully.

"Swim?" he asked presently, looking Miss Chalmers evenly in the eye.

"Why, cer— Oh, how ridiculous! Will you or will you not take those trunks?"

"Oh, I'll take them—only maybe the boat won't. Anyhow, we'll make a stab," he said cheerfully, shouldering the nearest trunk.

The boat took them, but not without wabbles of warning and an ominous loss of freeboard. The boatman dumped them aboard with easy nonchalance, while Miss Chalmers shivered in solicitude. But she made no comment; she was in a hurry, and she did not purpose to descend to argument with a longshore person.

"Well, I guess we're ready," said

the boatman as he gave the last trunk a final kick into place and reached a hand up for his passenger. Ignoring the hand, Miss Chalmers stepped swiftly aboard, unaided.

"Here, boy!" she called, tossing a quarter back upon the wharf.

The boy fell upon the coin and was off.

The six trunks of Miss Chalmers occupied three-fourths of the cockpit, so that she found herself crowded far aft, in close and unpleasant proximity to the bearded and greasy-shirted master of the launch. She wrapped her skirt close about her knees—not a very difficult task as skirts go—compressed her lips tightly, and stared out upon the river.

There was an interval of several minutes, during which the launch coughed, gasped, and volley-fired, while the boatman panted and heaved at the fly-wheel. Five times the engine started, and five times it stopped with a sob. The man arose from his knees, fumbled about for a candle, lighted it, and examined the gasoline contraption curiously. Then he spun the fly-wheel again, which produced more coughing and another wailing sob of despair.

Miss Chalmers turned abruptly from her survey of the river.

"For Heaven's sake, prime it!" she snapped.

The boatman twisted his head and regarded her with undisguised astonishment. He not only looked at Miss Chalmers, but he studied her hat, her gown, and her twenty-dollar shoes. He also resurveyed the six trunks. But Miss Chalmers had again turned her attention to the lights upon the river, and was unconscious of his scrutiny.

"That's a good tip," he observed, after satisfying his eyes.

Whereupon he primed the engine, and the boat buzzed away from the wharf.

Miss Chalmers was but partially relieved in mind when she found herself being borne out upon the St. Lawrence.

The day on the railroad had been hot and cindery, and the train was hours late at Clayton. To cap that misfortune, she had loitered to purchase some stamps and write some telegrams, and arrived at the wharf in time to get an excellent view of the disappearing stern-light of the last regular boat that would stop at Witherbee's Island that night. It seemed easier to get to Europe, she reflected.

Well out into the American channel, the boatman shifted his helm and headed the launch down-stream. He was smoking again, leaning back comfortably against the coaming, his long legs stretched out so that his feet were braced against the nearest trunk.

Occasionally he glanced at the lights that shone cordially from the islands and the mainland, and now and then paid brief attention to some passing craft; but most of the time he appeared to be studying the back of Miss Chalmers's head. Several times he smiled, and once his silent reflections brought forth a soft chuckle.

An hour passed. The launch still voyaged in midstream, making irregular détours where islands loomed out of the channel. Miss Chalmers extended her hand close to a flickering lantern that stood on the floor of the cockpit and examined the dial of her wrist-watch.

"How far have we gone?" she demanded.

The boatman studied the shore for a few seconds.

"Oh, seven or eight miles," he answered.

"And you say it's fifteen?"

"To Witherbee's? Oh, all of that."

"You mean to tell me this boat cannot do better than seven or eight miles an hour?"

"She has done better," sighed the boatman. "She did eleven once. But she was new then, and her bottom was clean, and her cylinder wasn't full of carbon, and she didn't leak, and her carbureter didn't have asthma, and she didn't have six trunks on board, and—"

Miss Chalmers interrupted the apology with an angry exclamation.

"It's nearly eleven o'clock," she said. "It's beyond endurance! I wish I hadn't started."

"Well, we can turn around any time," remarked the boatman mildly. "But she won't do better than eight miles an hour at the outside. You can play that bet to win."

Miss Chalmers devoted to the boatman a swift and stormy glance. He irritated her even more than his atrocious boat. The easy, almost familiar style of his speech was something to which she was unaccustomed — from the lips of common persons. It seemed to her that he assumed a position of equality.

A boatman — a grimy-handed, hatless, whiskered boatman! A person who hired out!

She set her jaws tightly and resumed her unsatisfying study of the river. Her dignity checked upon her lips a withering rebuke.

More islands were passed and the channel widened somewhat. The passenger observed with growing annoyance that there were fewer lights ashore. The summer folks were going to bed. High time, she thought; she was tired herself.

Nearly half an hour more elapsed, enlivened only by an astonishingly swift movement on the part of the steersman, who uncoiled himself like a spring, flung himself forward, and rescued, with a long and lean arm, the grip that belonged to his passenger just as it was about to slide quietly from the narrow deck into the hospitable St. Lawrence. Unceremoniously he jammed it into a safer place under the gunwale. Then he resumed his lolling posture at the tiller. Miss Chalmers made no comment.

Then, after a little, the rhythmical wheeze of the engine was supplanted by a series of irregular, choking gasps, then a sharp popping at broken intervals, and then—silence.

The boatman sat up lazily, reached

for the lantern, and held it close to the machinery. The launch carried her momentum for a minute, then swung broadside to the current and drifted contentedly. Miss Chalmers bit her lip.

Very deliberately the boatman studied the engine, poking the lantern about and, when it failed to illuminate dark recesses, lighting the stump of candle. Then he spun the fly-wheel.

There was no answer. Again and again he spun it, but the engine remained inert. After a while he resumed his placid and apparently purposeless examination of the gasoline monster.

"Well, what is the matter now?" demanded a cutting voice.

"Engine stopped," said the boatman, putting down the lantern and beginning to refill his pipe.

"Thank you for the information," said Miss Chalmers icily. "Why has it stopped?"

"I couldn't begin to tell you—ma'am."

There was something about the "ma'am," drawled out at the end, that peculiarly exasperated her; it seemed to lack the servility that was familiar to her from the lips of servants.

"Do you know anything about engines?"

"Not much that's good."

Miss Chalmers's temper was rising rapidly. She looked at her watch, then at the dark shores and islands.

"How dared you bring me out here if you didn't— Oh, it's—it's—perfectly outrageous! It's—"

She left the sentence unfinished, seized the lantern, brushed her way past the boatman without so much as a scornful glance, and dropped to her knees in the bottom of the cockpit.

The floor was oily and dirty, but Miss Chalmers paid no attention to that. She devoted the next five minutes wholly to an examination of the engine. The boatman watched and smoked.

Item by item, she inventoried the

one-cylinder pest. She peered into the oil-cups; she smeared her gloves on the cam that operated the timing-lever; she fussed with the tickler on the carbureter; she did a score of other things, while her audience watched in silence. After she got through with the engine she turned her attention to the batteries, tightening a wire connection here and there.

"Now, where's your socket-wrench?" she demanded.

"Socket-wrench?" repeated the boatman. "That's a new one on me. I don't remember—"

"Haven't you ever taken out the spark-plug?"

"Oh, you mean that funny thing that screws it out. Sure! I've got one somewhere."

He fumbled under a seat and drew out a box that contained a disorderly array of tools. Miss Chalmers dived a daintily gloved hand into it and brought forth what she sought.

"If you want me to do that—"

He did not finish the sentence, because she already had the spark-plug in her hand and was holding the points close to the light.

"Dirty, of course," she commented disgustingly. "Have you any sand-paper?"

He found a bit after more fumbling, and watched her while she scrubbed the metal points until they were bright. Then she replaced the plug and screwed it into position with a vigorous twist of the wrench.

The boatman had settled back in his place. After that she found a screw-driver and removed the cover from the float-chamber in the carbureter. A brief inspection of this mysterious compartment satisfied her.

"Now spin that fly-wheel," she said abruptly, rising from her knees and moving aside to make room for him.

The boatman spun the fly-wheel, not once, but many times. Twice the engine started, only to stop after a few revolutions.

"It's abominable!" exclaimed the

passenger. "What do you propose to do?"

"Nothing, I guess," replied the boatman. "You've done more things now than I ever knew could be done. Don't suppose you damaged anything, do you?"

She glared at him, then turned her scorching glance out upon the river.

"Here comes a boat!" she said suddenly.

The boatman followed the line of her pointing finger and discerned the lights of a craft that was bearing rather closely toward them.

"Do you think they will help us?" she asked.

"Might," he admitted.

"They must! I can't stay here all night. Hail them!"

He put two fingers between his lips and sent forth a shrill whistle.

"Do you call that a hail?" she exclaimed, rising to her feet. She made a miniature megaphone of her hands and flung a vigorous "Ahoy!" across the water.

The boat was closer now. Presently there was an answering voice.

"Any trouble?" said the voice.

The question affected the boatman like a shock of electricity. He started from his seat, leaned over the gunwale, and squinted through the gloom.

"Breakdown," called Miss Chalmers. "What boat is that?"

"Yacht Elizabeth. Want any help?"

Before Miss Chalmers could answer a voice at her ear boomed out:

"No-o-o, thanks! All right in a minute."

She turned in amazement upon the boatman, who was now on his knees in front of the engine, his face hidden from her.

"Why—you—you—"

The jingling of a bell from across the water interrupted her. Then she heard the churning of a propeller, and the dark outline of the yacht began to move again.

"Ahoy!" screamed Miss Chalmers.

"Never mind!" roared her boatman.

She whirled upon him furiously.

"How could you! How *dare* you! Are you mad? Do you think—"

She broke off and sent another hail in the direction of the yacht. But that craft had disappeared in the night, and there was no answering call.

She looked down upon the kneeling figure, a tempest of wrath upon her lips. The boatman was fussing aimlessly with a wrench.

Miss Chalmers fought for self-control. She had a passionate desire to slay, but she lacked a convenient means. Besides, she could not see that homicide would speed her way to Witherbee's Island. And even in her stormiest moments, Miss Chalmers never quite abandoned her grip on things as they were and problems that had to be met.

But she was bewildered, even alarmed. She did not fear the consequences, however unpleasant, of an all-night drift on the river. It was the boatman who furnished cause for dismay. She wondered if he was insane.

"I would like to know," she said, struggling to quiet her voice, "why you did that."

"Did what?"

"Sent that yacht away."

"Reasons," he responded briefly.

"Reasons! What reasons?"

His only answer was a shrug.

"I demand to be told why you sent those people away."

There was another hunch of his shoulders.

"Do you mean deliberately to keep me out here in this boat all night?"

"Oh, not at all!" he said easily.

"Then why did you—"

"Sorry. Can't explain."

Miss Chalmers sat down with a gasp and tried to consider the situation.

It was past midnight. The launch was slowly drifting down-stream in a steadily broadening channel. The boatman was unable to operate his engine, and had refused an offer of help.

He was probably mad. She wondered if he was dangerous.

For several minutes she sat in silence, watching him as he fussed about the machinery in an amateurish fashion. Then she gritted her teeth and aroused herself to action.

"Get out of the way!" she commanded.

He moved to make a place for her, and once more she knelt on the greasy flooring. Very patiently, considering the state of her emotions, Miss Chalmers went over the engine again.

She shook her head, puzzled. Nothing seemed to be wrong with it. Suddenly she turned to him.

"Where's your gas-tank?" she demanded.

"Forward. But you needn't look there. There's plenty. I filled it—"

She seized the lantern and began climbing over the trunks; she was not going to take the word of an incompetent. Her white gown suffered dismally as she scrambled in the direction of the gasoline-tank, and she had a sinking sensation that the spectacle afforded to the boatman was lacking in dignity. But she was determined, and tried to comfort herself with the thought that it was quite dark.

She located the tank and unscrewed the cap. The aperture was large enough to admit her hand and arm; in she plunged them resolutely. The tank was nearly full. She replaced the cap and crawled aft again.

Then the boatman did a strangely considerate thing. He turned his back and pretended to be doing something to the engine, while Miss Chalmers slipped down from the trunks and shook her skirt about her ankles. She made a mental note of it.

"Where does your gas-line run?" she asked briskly.

"Gas-line?"

"Oh, the pipe that connects the tank with the engine!" she cried in exasperation. "Don't you know *anything*?"

The boatman grinned cheerfully.

"I'm learning," he said. "It runs along under the gunwale on the port side, I think. I never paid much attention, but—"

"Hold the lantern here," she ordered, now on her hands and knees, with her head poked under the gunwale. The boatman obeyed.

"Now move forward," she directed.

He moved the lantern as she directed, while Miss Chalmers explored the gas-line, beginning at the carbureter.

Presently they arrived at an obstacle in the shape of the passenger's baggage.

"Move that grip," was her next order.

He yanked the rescued bag from its place of safety, and she craned her head into the opening. A few seconds later she withdrew it and bestowed upon the boatman a look of unutterable contempt.

"Get down here," she said.

He knelt beside her.

"Poke your head in there."

He obeyed. Miss Chalmers also poked her head in, so that wisps of her brown hair brushed his unshaven cheeks.

"Now, do you see that little handle there?" she inquired.

"Yes, ma'am."

The boatman's voice was meek.

"Do you know what it is?"

"No, ma'am."

"Well, it's the cut-off in the gas-line."

"Never noticed it before," he commented blandly.

"And it's cut off now," continued Miss Chalmers.

A gentle swell rocked the boat, and their heads bobbed together. She paid no attention.

"You cut it off when you jammed my grip under there," she said tersely.

"There! Now I've turned it on again. The idea is that a gasoline-engine always runs better when supplied with gas. Now spin that fly-wheel!"

The boatman went aft and obeyed.

The engine started joyfully. The launch moved. Miss Chalmers resumed her seat and surveyed her costume by the yellow light of the lantern.

"Now you take me to Witherbee's Island as quickly as you know how—if you do know," she observed.

The boatman made no answer. When the launch had obtained headway he altered the course, and presently they were passing through a series of narrow channels, between darkened islands. He seemed to know where he was going, but Miss Chalmers had no confidence in him. She was merely relieved to observe that they were going somewhere.

Presently they headed in toward a wooded island that was dark, save for a tiny light that flickered at the water's edge. As they neared the shore the boatman made his first remark since the engine had resumed wheezing.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to know—"

"I haven't run a six-cylinder car for nothing," interrupted Miss Chalmers sharply. "Is this the dock?"

For answer, he stopped the engine and guided the boat alongside a low wharf, at the end of which burned the lantern they had seen.

"Witherbee's Island," he said as he reached to help her ashore.

Miss Chalmers sprang upon the wharf without aid and demanded her trunks. The boatman heaved them out methodically. He paused for an instant to study an inscription on the end of a particularly bulky and heavy one, and, when he had difficulty in deciphering it, reached for the lantern. He read:

ROSALIND CHALMERS, N. Y.

Then the trunk followed its mates.

"Anything more I can do?" he asked pleasantly.

"I should say not! I owe you something, I suppose?"

"Well, rather."

"How much?"

"Ten dollars."

"Ten dollars!" cried Miss Chalmers. "For what happened? After all that— Why, it's—"

She snapped her purse open and handed him a bill with an angry gesture. In fact she flung it at him. Anything to be rid of him, she thought. He pocketed the money with a chuckle.

"My name is Sam," he remarked as he stepped back into the boat. "Any time you need a launch, why—"

"I'll know who not to engage," said Miss Chalmers, finishing the sentence.

The boatman laughed, started the engine, and headed across an open space in the river. Miss Chalmers glanced about her with a sigh of weary satisfaction. It was past one o'clock, but she had arrived!

CHAPTER II.

PAJAMAED VULGARIANS.

THAT particular insular possession owned by Mr. Stephen Witherbee was, indeed, a dark corner of the earth. It was also insistently quiet and lifeless. Just which one of the insufficiently enumerated Thousand Islands it was did not concern Miss Chalmers in the least, any more than it concerns the reader. All she sought was shelter and a couch.

She walked the length of the little wharf and stared in among the trees that came down to meet it. Somewhere beyond was a house, she knew—a house that contained Mr. and Mrs. Witherbee, Miss Gertrude Witherbee, perhaps Mr. Tom Witherbee, and various other persons who constituted a Witherbee house-party.

There was not the least doubt that they were all asleep. Miss Chalmers could not hear a sound save the ever-diminishing *thump-thump* of the one-cylinder launch.

"Asleep they are, certainly," she observed aloud. "I've done a ridicu-

lous thing, of course. It serves me right for coming a day ahead of time. That boatman—ugh!

"Where the house is I haven't the least idea. But I can't stay here. I *must* find a place to sleep. Perhaps—just perhaps—somebody is up, after all."

She returned to the end of the wharf and surveyed her six trunks. "They'll do until morning," said Miss Chalmers as she picked up her grip and started in search of the Witherbee house.

There was a gravel path, beginning where the wharf met the shore, and Miss Chalmers followed it. Even in the gloom of the trees this was not difficult, for the gravel was white, and lay before her like a ghostly streak. Besides, it crunched under the twenty-dollar shoes.

Miss Chalmers was displeased with herself. She felt foolish. Something had gone wrong with her poise; something seemed to have been subtracted from the considerable sum of her dignity. The world was not playing flunky as usual. Her old austerity was there, perhaps, but it lacked confidence and authority.

The path forked, and Miss Chalmers paused to consider. The house was still invisible.

"Why does a strange path always fork when one is alone and in a hurry, and particularly at night?" asked Miss Chalmers aloud.

There was no answer; so, after an instant of indecision, she took the fork that led to the right. Naturally it was the wrong fork. It simply had to be, under the circumstances. It brought her back to the shore of the island, where a summer pavilion was erected on a rocky point.

She retraced her steps back to the fork and took the left branch of the gravel path. In not more than two minutes it guided her to the edge of a lawn. Beyond this she could see the house—a large, solid, black mass against a background of trees.

"Not a single light!" she exclaimed impatiently. "It's positively—*uncouth!*"

She crossed the lawn and paused again at the foot of a flight of steps that led to a broad piazza.

"It's almost as if the place was closed," she commented as her glance roved upward toward the windows. "But of course it's not. Oh, well!"

She ascended the steps, crossed the piazza, and found a push-button in the framing of a closed door. She pushed and waited—but not long; she was too impatient for dalliance.

Several times she pushed the button in rapid succession, holding her thumb upon it for extended periods. Nobody came to the door, which angered her anew. Then she realized that she herself could hear no ringing of a bell.

"Out of order, of course," she said bitterly.

She rapped smartly with her gloved knuckles upon the paneling of the door time after time until they ached. Then she dropped her grip, went back to the lawn, and looked up at the house again. It slept calmly.

Miss Chalmers made a circuit of the Witherbee dwelling. Not a ray of light filtered out of it from any side, not a sound—not even a snore. She returned to the front door and rapped again. Then she seated herself in a porch-rocker and frowned.

"I absolutely will not shout," she told herself. "I am sufficiently absurd as it is. I will *not* be laughed at!"

She placed particular emphasis upon the last thought, as if somebody, somewhere, was displaying amusement at her plight. If there was one thing Rosalind Chalmers would not for an instant endure it was mirth of her own unintentional provoking. She was not a lady to be laughed at.

In the first place, she was too dignified, even to the point of a certain severity in manner. Where she lacked severity she substituted condescension. In the second place, she was too coldly handsome, too tall, too slimly erect.

In the third place, she was too old—twenty-five. In the fourth place, she was a Vassar graduate. In the fifth place, she was too rich. In the sixth place—

Oh, why continue? It is already plain that under no circumstances was Miss Chalmers a lady to be laughed at, even by equals—to say nothing of a common riverman.

Yet she knew exactly what would happen when she succeeded in arousing the sleepers on Witherbee's Island. First, they would grumble and stumble and rub their eyes. Then they would shuffle to a window or a door and discover her. Then there would be surprise and hurry and a scene. And then—then, when everybody was thoroughly awake—would come the laughter. She reasoned it very logically and found no flaw in her conclusions.

"I will not wake them," she decided. "I will get into that house somehow, find myself a couch down-stairs, and get my sleep. It's not that I mind waking them up; not a bit. But I won't be—"

She left the murmured sentence unfinished, arose from her chair, and walked briskly to the nearest window. The sash was either securely locked or thoroughly jammed, like a parlor-car window. She could not move it.

She tried the next window; the result was the same. A third window gave her no access to the dark interior of Witherbee House. She vented her annoyance in a sharp exclamation and turned the corner of the porch. The next window rattled encouragingly in its frame. It moved half an inch. She slipped the tips of her fingers under the sash, drew a deep breath, and heaved valiantly. The window ascended abruptly and with a clatter. And then—

A great bell clanged!

No decent, friendly, hospitable bell, but a raucous, brazen, mocking gong, pounded upon at the rate of a hundred or so strokes to the minute by a fiendish electric hammer.

The sound of the bell echoed in the gloom of the house and flung itself boisterously through the open window into the astonished and dismayed ears of Miss Chalmers. She fell back a step and raised her hands protectingly in front of her.

"A burglar-alarm!" she cried.

The din was appalling. It seemed to grow steadily in volume. Miss Chalmers was not truly frightened, but she was thoroughly amazed and startled. She was incontinently hurled from her pedestal of calm assurance.

For five seconds she hesitated. The bell boomed on. She stepped close to the window, placed her hands upon the sill, and leaned inward. From somewhere above she heard a heavy footstep, then a medley of sleepy voices.

She turned and ran.

She was dimly conscious in her precipitate retreat that, mingled with the clanging of the gong, there was another sound—a rattling of something on the porch floor. But it was not a propitious moment for investigation.

Around the corner of the porch she fled, upsetting a wicker table and scattering its burden of magazines. From its resting-place at the front door she scooped up her satchel. Down the steps to the lawn she leaped recklessly and then across the space of level sward.

Her skirt was not fashioned for running. With one hand she swept it up to her knees, a maneuver which added perhaps a knot to her speed. Give her a fair chance and Miss Chalmers was an excellent runner. She could even invest running with a certain stateliness and dignity—but not on this occasion.

Somebody had left a rocking-chair on the Witherbee lawn. She had not observed it when she approached the house, but now she fell over it. It bumped her knee cruelly, in addition to depositing her at full length upon the grass.

Within a second she was on her feet again, flaming with anger. She groped

for her fallen satchel, recovered it, and ran on toward the shelter of the trees. At the edge of the trees she paused and looked back. Lights were moving in the windows of Witherbee House. She heard voices, some shrill with alarm. Again she turned and fled.

Just why Miss Chalmers ran away from the haven of refuge she had been so long in reaching she could not clearly have explained. She was flurried in mind, yet not to such an extent as to dim the fact that her conduct was quite illogical. For fifteen minutes she had been trying to rouse the house; now that she had succeeded, she was in flight.

In among the trees she hesitated again. The simple and obvious thing to do was to walk straight back and announce herself. After that she would be in bed in ten minutes. But they might laugh. In fact, it was a certainty they would laugh. The alarm, the silly panic of a resolute lady, the chair on the lawn, her gown—oh, it was impossible. She ran once more, dodging among the trees and praying that she might find a path.

Presently she felt the gravel under her feet and followed the trail until it brought her back to the wharf, where her trunks crouched like black monsters in the faint light of the lantern. Here she paused to recover breath while she listened.

Through the little wood that had once seemed so dense she saw a glimmering of lanterns passing to and fro.

"I am *not* frightened!" panted Miss Chalmers hotly. "I am merely a fool! Yes—a complete fool! But they'll not find me—not now! Not for anything in the world! I'll go back; I'll find some way. I *won't* stay on this island. The whole thing is perfectly beastly and absurd!"

The moving lanterns among the trees seemed to be coming nearer. Men were calling to each other. She could hear footsteps on the gravel path.

There was no concealment on the

wharf, yet Miss Chalmers was determined to be concealed. There could be no backing out now. She looked quickly about her.

Close to the wharf, at the very edge of the water, she now observed what looked like a boat-house. She sprang toward it and stepped out upon a small float that was anchored in front of it to find herself barred from refuge by padlocked doors.

The lanterns were now close to the wharf. Miss Chalmers had no time to waste picking a lock, even if she knew how. She slipped around the corner of the boat-house and flattened herself close against it, trying desperately to breathe noiselessly.

A moment later there was a shuffling of feet on the wharf, then an exclamation of surprise in a man's voice. Her curiosity urged her to risk a peep. Very cautiously she advanced her head beyond the corner of the building that screened her.

What Miss Chalmers saw shocked her. Three men in pajamas, each carrying a lantern, were standing upon the wharf. Their feet were shod in bedroom slippers. Two of them carried walking-sticks gripped tightly at the wrong end, evidently intended to perform service as clubs. The third had a revolver.

She was shocked, not because she regarded pajamas and bedroom slippers as improper, but because they seemed so utterly common, so plebeian, so lacking in anything that approached character or smartness or form—in short, to the eyes of Miss Chalmers they were sheer vulgarity, even though of possible utility. She shuddered a little.

One of the men she recognized; it was Mr. Witherbee. She was well aware that Mr. Witherbee was stout, but not until now did she realize that he actually bulged. It was the first time she had ever seen a fat man in pajamas, and she was impressed with the fact that the effect was more robust than artistic.

One of the other men was tall and blond, with a drooping mustache. His pajamas were far too short in the legs and his bare ankles were inelegant.

The other man had his back toward her. She thought he might be Tom Witherbee. He looked more fashionable than the others. It was also he who held the pistol, which, perhaps, gave him just a suggestion of devil-may-care.

The three men were gravely regarding the six trunks. Miss Chalmers caught her breath.

Too late now! She could never disappear from Witherbee's Island and explain those trunks. Yet she knew this, too; she never, though the heavens might fall upon her otherwise, would step forth and proclaim herself to three men in pajamas.

Mr. Witherbee advanced to the nearest trunk and inspected it by the light of his lantern.

"Well, what do you know about that!" he exclaimed.

"'Pon my word, I know nothing whatever about it, my dear fellow," said the tall one.

"These are Miss Chalmers's trunks," declared Mr. Witherbee in a voice of wonder as he examined another.

The young man with the revolver made an inspection of his own and avowed that Mr. Witherbee was right. The tall one stroked his mustache and said nothing.

"But she's not expected till to-morrow!" cried Mr. Witherbee. "How the deuce did her trunks get here?"

"Must have sent them on ahead," observed the armed one.

"But who brought 'em? When? The boat didn't stop here to-night."

Mr. Witherbee stared at the trunks in succession and juggled one of them as if to assure himself that it was real. All the time he was muttering.

"Well, this isn't finding the burglar," remarked the man with the pistol. "He's probably gone by now, anyhow. Ah-h-h—I'm sleepy."

Mr. Witherbee pondered the trunks again.

"I've got a theory," he said presently.

"Shoot."

Miss Chalmers winced, divining that this was slang.

"Why, it's like this," said Mr. Witherbee, putting down his lantern and diagramming his remarks with his cane. "There's a prowler about these islands—you know that, of course."

"Well, Miss Chalmers sends her trunks on in advance. Some boat brings 'em down, probably after we're all in bed."

"This chap cruises around and spots the trunks. Then he comes ashore. He finds the house dark. He makes up his mind that everybody has gone away and that the trunks are waiting to be taken aboard the morning boat. So he makes a try at the house. Burglar-alarm goes off—he gets scared—runs like the Old Harry—hops into his boat—*au revoir*. How's that?"

"By Jove, it's wonderful!" said the tall man. "By the way, old man, are your ankles cold? Mine are."

"Accepting your theory, then," remarked the man with the pistol, "whoever rang the burglar-alarm has already escaped, so we can all go to bed."

"Clever as the deuce!" said the tall man.

"I don't suppose there is much more use in looking," admitted Mr. Witherbee reluctantly.

(His ankles were not cold.)

"You don't guess he could have hid in the boat-house, do you?"

Miss Chalmers shivered.

"It's locked," said the armed one. "He wouldn't bother with the boat-house. You can bet he's not on the island now. What 'll we do with the trunks?"

"Leave 'em until morning. It's not going to rain," Mr. Witherbee observed. "But, by jingo! I'd like to get that fellow!"

"So would I. But what's the use now? Listen! The folks are calling. I guess we'd better go back and tell them it's all over."

"All right," sighed Mr. Witherbee, picking up his lantern.

The trio in pajamas turned back toward the path. Miss Chalmers put her head forward cautiously for another glance. She was just in time to see the figure of the tall man disappear, his pajamas flapping disconsolately about his ankles, his lantern swinging listlessly.

"They're worse than the boatman," she commented.

Not until the last sign of a light had disappeared, and only when she could no longer hear sounds from the direction of the house, did Miss Chalmers venture from her seclusion. She went back to the dock and sat down on the string-piece.

"This is a fine state of affairs," she reflected. "Now I've got to stay. I never thought about the trunks."

"But how will I ever explain? I'll die before I admit I set off that burglar-alarm. I'll not only die, but I'll lie. I'll die lying. Some time to-morrow morning I've got to announce myself."

"But how? I'm an idiot—but I won't admit that either."

"Why did I run? That's what I should like to know—why? I've been behaving like a child."

Presently she shuddered, but it was not because there was a chill in the air. She was thinking of pajamas.

"I shall never wear them again," she murmured. "Thank Heaven, I brought—"

At this point her thoughts very naturally drifted to a consideration of some place to sleep. She had no liking for camping out under the stars if she could help it. She wanted a roof over her head.

Sneaking back to the open window in the Witherbee House was out of the question; anyhow, it was probably shut and fastened by this time. She

wondered if there was a way to get into the boat-house.

Back she went, armed with the dock lantern, and began an inspection of the lock. It was a solid-looking padlock, but Miss Chalmers thought the staple through which it was passed showed signs of weakness. She looked about for an instrument and finally found a stick that seemed as if it might do.

The stick broke several times during the process of prying the staple loose, yet she made headway. Under most conditions an impatient and somewhat imperious young lady, Miss Chalmers was curiously persistent when she set her hand to any mechanical task. She labored uncomplainingly at the staple for fifteen minutes, and gave a satisfied little nod when it fell loose from the woodwork.

The interior of the boat-house was not inviting. A rowboat and two canoes were piled along one side, with a lot of loose gear, a collection of ill-smelling paint-pots and some oars and paddles.

At the farther end was a pile of canvas. She tilted her nose slightly, but did not retreat.

"It's a roof at any rate," she observed. "I'll sleep on the canvas. Nothing can hurt this gown now. It's gone."

She put down the lantern, sat on the canvas, and slipped off her twenty-dollar shoes. Then she lay down and attempted to convince herself that the bed was comfortable.

It was an entirely laudable effort at self deception, but quite useless. The bed was anything but comfortable. It had some pulley-blocks under it, for one thing.

Nevertheless she became drowsy. This ordinarily delicious sensation crept upon her with unwelcome quickness. She wanted time to think about to-morrow morning. It might require considerable planning, she feared.

"Oh, well," she murmured in a resigned tone, "I guess it will come to me better after I sleep a little."

Then she almost slept. The reason she did not quite sleep was an abrupt volley of shots. She sprang to her feet with an angry exclamation.

"Haven't they stopped hunting me yet?" she snapped.

CHAPTER III.

MISS ACCESSORY-AFTER-THE-FACT.

HER initial impulse was to dash out of the boat-house, confront her pursuers, and visit them with a merited rebuke for having disturbed her rest. Not for an instant did it occur to Miss Chalmers that anybody else's rest had been disturbed by her.

But she remembered that she was not yet announced upon Witherbee's Island; that she would not, in fact, arrive until morning, so far as the official statement was concerned. So she checked her rush and occupied a wise half-minute in putting on her shoes.

Tiptoeing across squeaking boards to the open doorway, she looked out and turned her head in either direction. Silence had followed the shots. She could see no lights on the island. Everything was as restful and somnolent as a lecture on metaphysics.

She stepped out on the little float, from which she could obtain a better view of the wharf and the beginning of the gravel path. There was neither sign nor sound of the pajama squad, facts that contributed greatly to her satisfaction. Not a glimmer came from the direction of the house.

The shots puzzled her. She was wide awake now, and she was quite sure she had not dreamed a volley. Pausing for a couple of minutes on the float, she made her way noiselessly to the dock, where she stopped to listen again.

"I know perfectly well I heard shooting," she remarked. "I'm not given to imagining things. There!"

Four shots there were this time; she had not counted the first group. Instantly she ran to the end of the dock

and looked out across the water. As she stared into the darkness there was another shot, preceded some three or four seconds by a yellow flash.

"It's on another island," she told herself rapidly. "Can it be possible that there *are* burglars about? Heavens! Suppose they really did come here!"

She listened for more shots and watched for more flashes. Presently a light showed again, but it did not come from the muzzle of a gun.

She knew it to be the white, steady beam of an electric torch. A moment later another showed. Then they began moving in opposite directions. A little after that she heard the faint bark of a dog.

She glanced behind her into the woods of Witherbee's Island. Nobody else seemed to be paying the least attention to what was going on across the water.

Miss Chalmers's curiosity was unleashed and stalking from its lair. It was possessed with a consuming desire. She found it dragging her along, with little or no effort on her part to hold it back. Its enthusiasm infected her. She, too—all the rest of her—wanted to know what was going on out there in the river.

Curiosity is a subtly cunning creature. Almost before she knew it, it guided Miss Chalmers to a St. Lawrence skiff, the existence of which she had not noticed before. The skiff was moored to the wharf; it did not take her more than two seconds to lower herself into it, cast off the line, and pick up the two light oars that lay in the bottom.

"I might just as well," she remarked in extenuation. "It's out of the question to sleep. Nobody will know anything about it. And—well, it cannot be much more than half a mile."

She fitted the oars to the swivel-locks, swung the skiff around, took her bearings from one of the electric torches, and fell into a long, steady

stroke. The boat moved lightly and easily. She found something exhilarating in the exercise. She could not remember having touched a pair of oars since she rowed with her class-crew at Vassar.

She rowed well. That, of course, was characteristic of Miss Chalmers. Things that she could not do well, she did not do at all. For instance, holding her temper; almost invariably she bungled that, so she had given up trying. Besides, there is no particular reason why a rich, handsome, and imperious lady should hold her temper if she happens not to want to.

For a quarter of a mile she rowed without pausing, then made another observation over her shoulder. She was holding her course admirably, for the lights on the land ahead of her were much nearer. Now she could hear voices, particularly that of a man, who cursed a barking dog and then did something to it to make it yelp.

"It's another island," commented Miss Chalmers as she rested a second time, now not more than a hundred yards from the shore. "It's another burglar-hunt, too. Oh, dear! I suppose it means pajamas."

It did. Somebody struck a match to light a cigar, and the brief illumination revealed two men who were most palpably dressed for bed. She allowed the boat to drift quietly while she listened. The match burned out and the figures were hidden again, but she could hear their voices distinctly.

"The dogs aren't worth a hoot," growled one of the voices.

"Seems like they ain't quite as noticin' as they used to be, sir," admitted the other.

"I gave them the scent, right where we found the footprints in the flower-bed, but they didn't even seem excited."

"No, sir."

"Did you see him at all?"

"Not a sign, sir; nor heard him either."

"It's a deuce of a note," complained the first speaker. "I've got watch-

dogs and servants and locks on my doors and windows, and yet I can't keep thieves out of my house."

"If only Mr. William was here, sir, we might—"

"Confound Mr. William! He's not here and he won't be here, so we've got to do without him—Listen! What was that?"

"I think that's James and Eliza hunting along the other side of the island, sir."

"Eliza! Is she at it, too?"

"She stopped to dress, sir," explained the voice apologetically and hastily. "She's awful particular about James, sir. She don't want nothing to happen to him unless she's—"

"Never mind that. If she wants to make a fool out of herself, she may, so long as she continues to get the washing done. We'll go on up the shore until we meet them. But I suppose it won't be any use."

"Probably not, sir."

"Here, Duke! Where's that blooming dog now? Oh, well; let him go. I suppose he's eating out of the burglar's hand."

The torch carried by one of the speakers began moving along the edge of the island. Miss Chalmers was slightly bored. Being a watcher was not nearly so exciting as playing the quarry. But she decided to follow.

One of the oars rattled in its swivel, and she heard the two searchers halt.

"He's in a boat!" exclaimed the one in authority.

"I don't think it was that, sir. It sounded more like—"

"I tell you I heard it perfectly. Don't stand arguing. Come on! It's too late; but we'll finish the round, or at least until we meet James. Ouch! Great—"

The remainder of the sentence was blurred, yet high-pitched. A minute later Miss Chalmers heard:

"If it was Patrick who left that lawn-mower standing out I'll ship him off to-morrow. Why in blazes didn't you throw a light on it?"

"Sorry, sir. But you've got the torch, sir."

"Shut up! Come on!"

The men began moving again. Miss Chalmers calmly reached down and tore a large piece of expensive goods from the bottom of her skirt. This in turn she tore in halves. Then she carefully swathed the swivels.

When the oars were replaced they made a sound so soft that it could not have been heard a dozen feet. Keeping her distance from the shore-line, she followed the searchers.

The man who seemed to own the island began to talk again:

"He'd have had the silverware and the whole works if it hadn't been for me. It's a pity I have to do all the hearing for this house. I don't see why my servants can't have insomnia once in a while. What are they paid for? I have it, so I suppose everybody else thinks it's all right to imitate the *Seven Sleepers*. You're quite sure he didn't take any of the silverware?"

"Almost certain, sir. But I'll look again when we get back. Nothing on top of the sideboard had even been touched."

"Well, it's mighty queer; that's all I've got to say. Except that I've a good mind to shoot a couple of dogs to-morrow morning."

"Oh, sir—please—I wouldn't, sir. They'll probably do better next time, sir."

"Next time! How many times do you expect this is going to happen, I'd like to know? I tell you I'll shoot 'em!"

"But they're not mad, sir; and I think—"

"Mad! I know they're not mad, you idiot! But they'll be darn well provoked if I pump a couple of bullets into 'em."

Miss Chalmers rowed on slowly, her lip curled slightly to indicate her contempt for the conversation. It seemed to her that the evening had furnished nothing save a series of

revelations of the incompetence of man. Not a thing that any man had done within her ken that night but she could have performed more efficiently herself, she reflected.

This was the stronger, the dominant sex, was it? With her shoulders she made an eloquent gesture, which was lost upon the night.

Almost at the point of returning to Witherbee's Island was she, when a yell from the shore caused her to turn her head swiftly.

"There he is now, by George! He's got a boat. Run! Head him off, before he gets away!"

A dog began to yelp excitedly.

"Sick him, Duke! Sick him! Stop that yawping and grab hold!"

She heard a soft patter of footsteps along the shore, then the staccato note of a gasoline engine.

"Lord! It's a motor-boat! There he goes! Hang that dog, he missed him!"

A fresh volley of shots came from the island.

"Get the launch! Quick! We're almost at the boat-house now! We'll get him yet!"

"Yes, sir; I'm after it."

The motor-boat that Miss Chalmers heard was exploding gasoline in boisterous fashion. She leaned as far as she dared across the gunwale of the skiff and tried to discern objects in the gloom.

It was difficult to distinguish anything save the dark bulk of the island. But the gasoline motor was whirling furiously. Then there were voices again.

"Got her cast off?"

"N-no, sir; not yet."

"For the love of Mike, hurry! He's under way now."

"There! All right, sir."

"Get forward and keep a lookout. Tell me which way to steer."

A second engine burst into action with a defiant roar. Miss Chalmers, resting upon her oars, knew that a chase had begun.

It was rather exciting now. A burglar was being pursued, but she could see neither the burglar nor the pursuers. Two engines were trying to smother each other's din, with the result that their voices mingled in a discordant bedlam.

Then a dark object passed within fifty feet of her skiff, ran on for a hundred feet more, suddenly slowed down, and ceased firing. In closer to the island, but still beyond her vision, the second boat was clattering truculently, and the voices rose even higher.

"He's stopped! He's stopped! Spot him now! It's our chance!"

"Can't see him yet, sir."

"You've got to see him! If you miss him you're fired! Why the blazes do I have to be near-sighted?"

Miss Chalmers edged her skiff closer to the boat that had abruptly paused in flight. She had a suspicion. A moment later she knew. A half-suppressed exclamation reached her ears. The voice was one of recent memory.

For several seconds she was irresolute. Far be it from her to interfere with the long arm of justice or retribution, or whatever it might chance to be. It was no business of hers to trip nemesis. And yet—

Well, perhaps she would not have acknowledged that it was sporting blood, but it was something singularly resembling it. She cared not a whit for the burglar; he deserved his fate. Contrariwise, she cared nothing whatever about the pursuers. They were entitled to no better than they could achieve. But she *did* care about something else.

A stalled engine was a perpetual challenge to her.

To some persons the joy of battle lies in overcoming fellow men, to others in conquering the forces of nature, to still others in achieving hard-won triumphs over poverty or riches or other forms of adversity or perversity.

To Rosalind Chalmers, by some queer twist of her brain, it lay in starting a balky engine.

She hesitated no longer. What she did was without reason; but she was past that. Her fighting mood was uppermost. She laid to her oars and put herself alongside the motionless launch with such violence that the skiff rocked threateningly. Another instant and she was aboard.

The crouching figure of Sam, the boat person, arose from the cockpit. Simultaneously a long arm whipped out with all his weight behind it. Miss Chalmers dodged.

"You fool!" she exclaimed wrathfully. "Here—hold the painter of this skiff."

The boatman whistled shrilly, then chuckled.

"Well, if it isn't the master mechanic!" he said.

Not far distant in the darkness the second launch was plunging furiously onward, the man in the stern anathematizing his lookout.

"Thief!" hissed Miss Chalmers. "Strike a light here."

She was already bending over the silent engine.

"They'll see me if I do," said the boatman. "Best lie quiet for the present."

"A light!" she commanded.

He obeyed, holding the match low in the boat as he lighted the candle-stub and shielded the flame with his hand.

"You burglar!" she muttered contemptuously. "Where's your wrench?"

He reached under a seat and handed it to her.

"Hold that light closer—thief! Give me a hammer, too."

Fresh shouting reached their ears. The light in the cockpit had been seen by their pursuers.

"Starboard! Starboard, sir!" beseeched an anxious voice.

"I see him. Shut up! You ought to have spotted him before. Stand ready now to make fast to him."

The boatman turned a glance in the direction of the voices and whistled again.

"I guess I'd better swim for it," he observed complacently.

"You quitter!" cried Miss Chalmers. "Get that light closer. There—hold it so! Oh, how helpless you are!"

The boatman's ears told him that pursuit was steadily drawing closer.

Miss Chalmers was doing something swiftly and mysteriously—just what, Sam had no idea. She gripped and twisted something with the wrench, then struck something else two smart blows with the hammer. A second later she seized the rim of the fly-wheel in both hands and gave it a vigorous turn. The engine buzzed noisily.

"There—you house-breaker!" she cried triumphantly.

The boatman took the tiller and blew out the candle.

"Much obliged," he remarked.

She dropped, panting, to a seat, and began to wonder what irresponsible act she would next commit.

There were cries of dismay from the stern boat when the quarry was off again, but there was no abandonment of the pursuit. In fact it was enlivened by a pair of bullets, which struck the water not far from the rejuvenated launch.

"Better get down on the floor," advised the boatman.

Miss Chalmers held her place.

Very calmly the boatman reached out, laid a hand upon her shoulder, and twisted her off the seat with a single motion, so that she landed with a bump on the floor.

"How—"

"Dared I?" he inquired. "Oh, I don't see any sense in running a chance of getting plugged. That fool back there just might hit something."

She was in a white rage from the touch of his hand and for the moment speechless. But she did not climb back on the seat.

Another shot sounded, but it went wide. The boatman took a knife from his pocket and cut the rope from which the skiff trailed in their wake. Miss Chalmers uttered a cry of despair at his action.

"We can't tow dead wood and expect to get away—not in this tub," explained the boatman.

"I—I don't want to get away!" she exclaimed.

"You don't?" There was genuine astonishment in his voice. "Then why in Sam Hill did you start that engine?"

She felt there was no fitting reply, so said nothing.

Soon there was a new sound from the rear, or rather a jumble of sounds—a shout of warning, a crash, a splintering of wood.

"There goes one of Mr. Witherbee's skiffs," commented the boatman. "They ran it down."

The lady who sat on the floor made no comment. She had no compunctions concerning the skiff, but she was suddenly alarmed over her own plight.

How would she get back now?

"He's gaining some," observed the boatman after a short interval. "I told you I wasn't a speed-king."

Miss Chalmers's mind once more detached itself from her predicament. She rose to her knees and stared out over the stern.

What the boatman said was true. The launch behind was now clearly visible.

"At this rate he'll get us in about five minutes," added the boatman after another inspection.

She made a dive for the engine and began tinkering with the spark. They *must* escape! It would be too humiliating, too utterly beyond explanation to be caught now. She coaxed a few more revolutions out of the engine.

It did not trouble her that she was trying to cheat the law of its prey. She was wholly solicitous for the reputation and the dignity of Rosalind Chalmers.

"We're doing better than eight, now," she said defiantly.

"We haven't got the trunks," he explained. "But I'll bet she can't go nine."

Couldn't she? Miss Chalmers purposed to see. She mothered the engine again, touching it here and there deftly and tenderly, adjusting a screw, listening, adjusting again, doing a dozen things that the boatman would not have thought of doing. The engine responded gallantly.

"That's the first time I ever heard it purr," he said, in admiration. "You don't happen to be the inventor of that engine, do you?"

She ignored the question. She was too busy trying for that nine miles.

But still the stern boat gained—not so rapidly as before, yet consistently.

"I can't do any more," she said desperately. "You've got to do the rest. Do you understand? You've *got* to!"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the boatman. "Will you take a chance in a mean channel?"

"Anything!" she cried.

"That's funny," he chuckled, "for a lady who doesn't want to get away. I was going to take the chance anyhow. Sometimes I make it and sometimes I miss it. I've been aground there six times. This is the first time I ever tackled it at night."

Miss Chalmers looked over her shoulder and saw that they were rapidly approaching land.

"You're running straight ashore!"

"Maybe—if I don't hit it."

By hitting "it" he meant a channel, into which they plunged a moment later. It was very narrow and very dark, and it served to make two islands where the casual observer thought there was only one.

"If we don't pile ourselves up this is going to be about as clever a thing as I ever did," remarked the steersman genially. "If we do hit anything you'll find a life-preserver under the starboard seat. In any event I'll lay you three to one they don't follow us."

She did not take the bet; she was too intent upon watching the rocks that rushed by almost within reach of her arm.

"I said it would be a pretty clever stunt," observed the boatman a moment later. "Here we are in open water again. No fear; they won't try it."

He swung the tiller sharply. The launch swerved and began to follow a new course.

"Is that Mr. Witherbee's Island?" demanded Miss Chalmers, pointing.

"That? No, indeed. We've been going away from Witherbee's."

"Take me there at once."

"You mean to say you really want to go back?"

"Take me there! Do you hear?"

"Why—yes, if you say so. Only, I took you there once and you wouldn't stay put. What brought you out, anyhow?"

"My own affair," answered Miss Chalmers shortly.

"Meaning I'm not to ask questions. All right. I'll take you back. You needn't worry about that—ma'am."

"Worry!" she flashed. "Do you think I'm worrying? Do you think I'm afraid—just because you are a burglar?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," answered the boatman slowly, "I've got an idea you're afraid I'm not a burglar."

"But you are!"

He shrugged his shoulders and devoted his attention to the course. It was a roundabout way to Witherbee's Island. The voyage was finished in silence. She did not know whether she was sorry or pleased when she set foot upon the lonely dock for a second time.

"No charge this time," observed the boatman. "It's on me."

She turned upon him fiercely.

"Let me warn you," she said, "that if you are caught—"

The boat was under way again.

"Well, good night—or rather good

morning — Miss Accessory-after-the-fact," he called back.

CHAPTER IV.

QUESTIONS—AND A CLUE.

DAWN gently touched the eyes of Miss Chalmers and awakened her. She sat up briskly and surveyed the interior of the boat-house, at first with bewilderment, then with quick understanding.

"I remember," she nodded.

Then, glancing at her gown, she added:

"It's not likely I could forget. This is the day I arrive. I must hurry."

She reached for her grip, opened it, took out a ring full of keys, and arose from her canvas couch. A brief reconnaissance from the doorway of the boat-house assured her that Witherbee's Island was probably sleeping late, making up a lost hour.

She ran swiftly to the wharf, selected without hesitation one of her six trunks, unlocked it, and spent two minutes with its contents. Then she retreated to the boat-house.

Fifteen minutes later she reappeared with a bundle under her arm, returned to the trunk, stowed her burden away, shut down the lid and locked it again.

Miss Chalmers was a different lady. Her gown, her gloves, her hat, her shoes were all spotless. She carried a sunshade. Her hair was smoothly gathered in a low and luxuriant coil. If a Fifth Avenue shop had suddenly appeared in the background you would have wagered she had just stepped out of it.

"I think I'll take a little walk," she said.

She did not seek the path, but chose to follow the line of the shore in a direction opposite from that of the house. The morning air was virile. She breathed slowly, deeply, purposefully. She was a very healthy young woman.

"I have just arrived," she told her-

self. "I came down on a very early boat. I wonder if there *are* any early boats—regular ones. If not, I hired one.

"And it's all perfectly true, too. I did get here this morning; it was past midnight. My trunks came ahead of me. How they came to be sent down last night I don't know; I'm not supposed to know.

"H-m! That's not quite so truthful. However, it will have to do. Of course, I know nothing about anything else—if they mention it. Particularly the pa-pajamas. I never saw them; I never heard anything; I never went anywhere.

"I don't think it's lying—exactly. If it is, so much the worse for the truth. It's necessary."

She followed the shore for several minutes and then, when the walking became difficult, retraced her steps. Out across the river she could see the island where the second burglar-hunt took place. Occasionally she scanned the water in other directions, half expecting to see her boatman engaged in futile fumbling at his engine. But there was no sign of him.

"To think—a thief!" she exclaimed. "I employed a thief! I might have known he was a thief when he charged me ten dollars! And twice I started the engine for him! I can't imagine why I did it—except the first time. I wouldn't be here now if I hadn't done that. It cost me a new gown, but— Oh, well! What's a gown?"

"Such a brazen thief, too—he accepted what I did as a matter of course! Bah! A dirty spark-plug! The thing is without excuse."

Miss Chalmers had reached the wharf again. Now she paused hastily and stood rigid, watching a figure that stood on the end of it. The man, who was tall and rather square in the shoulders, was dressed in white flannels. He was standing on the string-piece, his back toward her, his eyes searching the river through a pair of field-

glasses. From right to left his vision ranged, while he stood with the military erectness of a bronze statue.

Once, as his head turned, she glimpsed the end of a tawny mustache. Then she knew him for one of the pajama trio. Involuntarily she looked at his ankles, and breathed a soft sigh of comfort when she saw that they were well covered.

Eventually, becoming tired of watching the watcher, she stepped quietly out upon the wharf, advancing to the nearest of her trunks and seating herself upon it. She was still studying the observer, wondering whether to speak first or to wait for him to turn, when there came a swift change in the tableau.

A bell rang loudly.

The tall man on the string-piece dropped his glasses into the river and whirled about. Then, remembering the glasses, he reached for them, a full second after they disappeared.

He reached too far for the purpose of equilibrium—not far enough to retrieve his loss. His body swayed outward. He clutched at the air; it slipped easily through his fingers. Then, folding up like a jack-knife, he disappeared from Miss Chalmers's vision.

The last thing she noted was a pair of surprised blue eyes, looking at her with unblinking steadiness. She was not at all astonished that the splash was a loud one, considering the manner in which he made his plunge.

The bell still rang blithely.

Miss Chalmers sprang down from her trunk and seized her grip, which lay almost at her feet. She had had enough of bells. Snatching it open, she turned back the alarm lever on a nicked clock, then snapped the grip shut again. After that she resumed her seat and waited.

Over the string-piece a head appeared. Its owner observed her solemnly.

"I—er—I beg pardon, you know," said the head. "But—er—by Heavens! did you hear a bell, madam?"

Miss Chalmers shook her head.

"Odd as the deuce!"

His shoulders came into view and his arms gripped the stringpiece.

"Odd as anything in the world," he added, as he continued to stare at her. "I could swear there was a bell, you know."

"I don't hear it," she said.

"Nor I, madam. It—er—seems to have stopped, you know. But there was one—oh, I'm sure! Unless, of course, you say there wasn't. I may have been mistaken. But—oh, it's frightfully odd!"

Miss Chalmers chewed her under lip until the pain made her wince. She had never before seen a long, yellow mustache drip water at both ends, and she was amazed at the quantity.

"If you've finished tubbing, why not come completely ashore?" she inquired presently.

"Why—er—thank you. I believe I will."

The rest of him appeared above the string-piece.

"Did you get your glasses?"

He stared at her for half a minute longer.

"I supposed, of course, you were going after them," she added gravely.

"So I was, by Jove! I quite forgot."

The tall man in the wet flannels turned around, stepped upon the string-piece again, poised himself, and then shot head downward into the water, cleaving it as cleanly as an arrow. Miss Chalmers was too surprised to move. She merely waited.

A quarter of a minute, then half a minute elapsed. Then, just as she was minded to run to the end of the wharf and look for him, a hand containing a pair of field-glasses appeared, followed immediately by its owner.

"Awfully good of you to remind me, don't you know."

Miss Chalmers was thinking swiftly.

"I don't know whether he is a fool or not," she told herself. "I'll be careful."

The tall man stroked his wet mustache and looked down at his flannels.

"Hope I didn't frighten you, I'm sure," he observed.

"Not in the least. You—interested me."

"Awfully kind of you to say that—awfully kind, Miss—er—er—"

"Chalmers."

"Ah—Miss Chalmers! We were expecting you—but not so early."

"I took an early boat."

"Why—er—the first boat down doesn't get here before ten, I believe," he said, staring again. "And it's not more than—"

"Not more than three minutes after six," interrupted Miss Chalmers. Then she flushed and frowned.

The man took out his watch and held it to his ear. He looked at the dial.

"Still going and— By Jove, you're right, Miss Chalmers; What amazing guesses you Americans make!"

It was not a guess, however. Miss Chalmers's alarm clock, now ticking softly in her grip, had been set for six exactly. But she could not explain.

"We came so early," she said hastily, "that I decided to wait until somebody was up. I've been walking around the island, Mr.—Mr.—"

"I beg your pardon. Morton is the name."

He bowed deeply.

"As I was saying, Mr. Morton, I took a short walk after the boatman put me ashore, and—"

"Boatman, you said?"

"Why, yes; certainly."

"A chap with his own boat, was it?"

"It seemed to be his own boat," answered Miss Chalmers. "It's not very much to own, however."

Mr. Morton appeared to be interested.

"Now—if I'm not too inquisitive, you know—would he be a man with a beard?"

"He would; in fact, he was."

"Hum!"

Morton fell silent for a little, then turned to the river, raised his glasses, and made another survey. Miss Chalmers was becoming curious. Mr. Morton faced her.

"If you'll pardon me again, Miss Chalmers, would his name be Sam?" he inquired.

"He said it was. But why?"

Mr. Morton was silent again. Once more he scanned the St. Lawrence, now shining under the risen sun.

"Um—er—" said the dripping one as he abandoned his scrutiny. "Why? Did you ask why, Miss Chalmers? Why—er—really, no reason at all, you know. I've seen him—that's all. Just occasionally, you know. Really no reason at all, I assure you."

Miss Chalmers was assured there was a reason. She did not, however, pursue the inquiry. She told herself that it would be unseemly; what she meant was that it might be embarrassing.

Mr. Morton seated himself on the string-piece and allowed his glance to encompass her baggage.

"We saw your boxes last night," he remarked after a study.

"Indeed?"

Miss Chalmers spoke cautiously.

"Quite a surprise, you know, to Mr. Witherbee and all of us. We were looking for a rascal—a scoundrelly thief, by Jove—and all we found were your boxes. They're tremendously prompt with luggage in this country, aren't they? Why, they get it there ahead of you!"

"Sometimes," she admitted. "Did I understand you to say something about a burglar?"

"A burglar," he confirmed. "He rang the alarm, you know. Woke us all up. Rotten nuisance. Hunted all over the island. Found nothing—except your boxes. The bally bell woke the whole house."

He looked rather fixedly at Miss Chalmers.

"Awfully odd about that other bell, wasn't it?" he observed. "Quite

startled me, you know. Made me drop my glasses. Must have been thinking of burglar-alarms."

"It was probably an echo of the alarm," she suggested.

"Really now, could it have been? Odd idea that. And you might be right, you know. You might be terrifically right, Miss Chalmers. They say your echoes travel tremendous distances in this country."

Miss Chalmers was vaguely uneasy. She felt that she was suspected as to the six-o'clock bell. She could not be sure, but he stared rather hard. Nor was she reassured when Mr. Morton coupled it in his memory with the ringing of the midnight chime in Witherbee House.

Perhaps it was natural enough to make the association; they were both bells, and both were abrupt and startling. But—well, she wondered if the man in the wet flannels was really a clever person.

"Are there many burglaries here?" she asked.

"I can't speak for the other islands, of course," he replied. "But this was the first for Mr. Witherbee. Fine chap, Mr. Witherbee. I'm just a guest, you know."

"Was anything stolen?"

Miss Chalmers asked the question perfunctorily.

"Upon my word, not a thing! Rather a joke, you know, too, because he left a clue."

"A clue?"

She sat up straight on her trunk.

"Seems like a clue, at any rate. You see—"

There was a heavy crunching on the gravel path, and the voice of Mr. Witherbee called:

"Well, Rosalind Chalmers! And at this hour of the morning. You and your trunks seem to make a specialty of mysterious arrivals."

Mr. Witherbee greeted her effusively and surveyed her from head to foot.

"Same girl, same girl," he commented admiringly. "Style—class—eh,

eh, Morton? Oh, I beg your pardon! Have you met Mr. Morton?"

Miss Chalmers indicated that an introduction was unnecessary.

"I was so early, I thought I'd better wait down here for a while," she explained.

"Nonsense! Why didn't you come up at once? Ring the bell—bang on the door—do anything. We don't mind. Do we, Morton? Why, man alive, what's happened to you?"

Mr. Witherbee was regarding the white flannels with wide eyes.

"Mr. Morton dropped his glasses overboard and went to recover them," said Miss Chalmers.

The man on the string-piece shot a swift glance at her, then nodded confirmation.

"Huh!" said Mr. Witherbee, as he marveled at the wetness of his guest. "Just for a pair of glasses, eh? You're a queer cuss, Morton. By the way, Rosalind, did he tell you about the burglar?"

"He's just finished telling me."

"Fine note! Tell you all about it by and by. This is your grip, is it? You must come straight up to the house. Mrs. Witherbee 'll be delighted."

He lifted the grip, grasped Miss Chalmers cordially by the arm, and started up the wharf. Then he stopped suddenly. A perplexed expression came into his face. Suddenly he cocked his head on one side and listened.

"Hear anything?" he asked Miss Chalmers.

She shook her head.

"I do," he affirmed. "Something clicking."

He listened again, then raised the grip and applied his ear to it. Miss Chalmers flushed.

"Please, let's hurry," she said, urging him on.

Mr. Witherbee laughed.

"Clock, eh? I couldn't make it out at all."

She did not venture a glance at the

guest, who remained behind, even when Mr. Witherbee called back:

"Better change those clothes, old man. Early breakfast to-day."

Mr. Morton remained sitting on the string-piece, looking after them with expressionless eyes.

Mrs. Witherbee was a sunup riser, like her husband, and she greeted her new guest with open arms.

"Everybody will be down presently," she said. "My, how wonderfully fine you look! How do you manage it—at such an hour? I suppose I'm a fright. Well, no wonder—this morning. Did Stephen tell you—the burglar? Oh, it was a terrible scare! I'm so glad, my dear, you were not here. It would have upset you frightfully."

Miss Chalmers, standing on the porch, glanced across the lawn and saw an overturned chair.

"Things like that do upset one," she murmured.

"I should say they did!" exclaimed Mrs. Witherbee. "I'm afraid I'll never feel safe on this island again. I'll always be lying awake waiting for that alarm to go off. Really, I'd feel safer with it taken out, Stephen."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Witherbee. "Why, it scared him away, didn't it?"

"And scared the rest of us almost to death. I can't see any economy in that, I must say. I suppose, though, we should be thankful we're alive. Shall I show you your room now, Rosalind, or will you wait until after breakfast?"

"I'll wait," said Miss Chalmers.

Mrs. Witherbee stepped into the hall and called:

"Gertrude!"

"Yes, mother," answered a voice from above.

"Rosalind is here."

"I'll be down in a jiffy."

"And, Gertrude!"

"Well, mother?"

"Bring down what we found after the burglar left, dear."

"All right."

Mrs. Witherbee returned to the

porch to find Miss Chalmers staring at her apprehensively.

"We've got a clue," she bubbled. "It's the strangest thing in the world. I suppose if you simply have to have a burglar, the next best thing is to have a clue. Stephen thinks it may lead to a capture. Do you still think you'll send for detectives, Stephen?"

"We'll see; we'll see, my dear."

Miss Chalmers walked to the porch-rail and steadied herself.

A clue!

It seemed she had never heard a word that sounded so sinister. A clue to the burglar! She shivered a little.

"Rosalind, you're positively chilly!" exclaimed Mrs. Witherbee, slipping an arm around her. Run, Stephen, and tell Mary to hurry the coffee. It's this morning air, my dear. You'll get used to it in no time."

There was a quick step in the hallway, and Gertrude Witherbee rushed out upon the porch. Miss Chalmers returned the embrace rather perfunctorily. She was thinking of clues.

"Here it is, mother," and Gertrude tossed an object to Mrs. Witherbee.

"Our clue!" said the lady of the island, holding it up for inspection.

Miss Chalmers was looking at her own bracelet.

CHAPTER V.

THE PLOT CURDLES.

"**WHY**—why—"

She checked herself and reflected swiftly. She must not—she could not—claim it.

"Why," faltered Miss Chalmers weakly, "what a curious bracelet!"

"Isn't it, though?" exclaimed Mrs. Witherbee, holding it up so that the light played upon the dull gold. "That's what all of us said. We're having a time trying to decide who will keep it—that is, of course, if nobody's claims it. Gertrude is crazy about it; Polly Dawson wants it; I fancy it tremendously myself."

"May I see it?" asked Miss Chalmers.

She gazed more sadly than curiously at the bauble Mrs. Witherbee dropped into her palm.

"Notice the carving," urged Mrs. Witherbee. "Did you ever see anything so odd?"

"It's very odd," assented the owner dully.

"And not a jewel in it!"

"Not a jewel," echoed Miss Chalmers, shaking her head.

"Gertrude and I have been wondering where in the world it was purchased. We both want one. But there isn't the sign of a maker's mark; it doesn't even say how many carats."

The artistic soul of Miss Chalmers was in revolt. Maker! Carats! There was something shockingly coarse in the suggestion. How little they understood! Nobody in the whole world knew the name of the artisan who fashioned it, nor ever would know. He went to his peace five thousand years ago. There were no carats in those days; not for this workman. For he made the thing for a princess, and he made it of pure gold.

Nowhere, unless in some undiscovered tomb in Egypt, was there anywhere its mate. Weighed in the scales of trade, it might have brought fifty dollars as metal. To Miss Chalmers it was a thing beyond price.

She knew little of its history save this: Only two women in the world had worn it. One was a princess, daughter of some forgotten Pharaoh. It was upon her wrist when they opened the tomb. The other woman was Rosalind Chalmers.

Just how Reginald Williams came into possession of it Miss Chalmers never knew, but he had brought it to America for her. And she had worn it with a pleasant sense of satisfaction in the fact that the bracelet had merely been transferred from the arm of a dead princess to a living one. Miss Chalmers, rightly enough, had an excellent opinion of herself.

Reggy Williams thought she wore it for him. It was neither kind nor worth while to tell him his mistake. The reason she wore it had partly to do with the Egyptian princess and partly with the fact that it was unique and beautiful.

Now, as it lay in her hand, she experienced a sense of dismay. She could snap it about her arm, of course, and then explain—explain that—Of course she could *not*! No; that was out of the question. Not after all she had told them that morning.

Into Miss Chalmers's mind flashed the memory of a sound that had reached her ears, even in the tremendous din of the Witherbee burglar-alarm. She recalled it as a rattling noise, but had given it no second thought in her panic. The discovery of her bracelet in the possession of her hosts supplied an exasperating explanation. She asked absently:

"You say the burglar dropped it?"

"Right on the porch where he had opened the window," said Mrs. Witherbee.

"Tom says it was quite a little distance from the window, mother," interrupted Gertrude.

"It was on the porch, at any rate," continued the hostess. "We think he had just stolen it from some other island. It's not likely a man would be carrying a thing like that around for any length of time.

"Tom found it while they were hunting with the lantern last night. We're going to make inquiries, of course; but, to tell you the truth, dear, we're just hoping a little that the owner won't be found. In that case we'll keep it."

"You mean *I'll* keep it, mother," said Gertrude.

"Well, Polly wants it, too, my dear. Probably the best way will be to send it to the city and have copies made. Then we can each have one."

Miss Chalmers shuddered.

"We've all tried it on, but I think it fits me best," asserted Gertrude.

The owner felt dizzy. It had been tried on—defiled!

"You can wear it for a while, if you like, Rosalind," aid Gertrude generously.

"No, thank you," answered Miss Chalmers as she returned the bracelet to Mrs. Witherbee.

Her voice was flat and faint.

After that Tom Witherbee joined the group and the tale of the midnight alarm was spun again. Then came Polly Dawson, short, plump, and light-headed—both ways, for she was blond—and Polly told it all over, but in such different fashion, and with such a completely new set of facts that it became quite a new story.

Afterward a few others came straggling down—the two Winter girls, Fortescue Jones, and a dull-looking youth named Perkins, of whom Miss Chalmers had never heard. And presently Mr. Morton, rearrayed, made his second appearance that morning. He bowed again very formally to the new guest.

It was a dull breakfast for Miss Chalmers. Everybody except herself babbled incessantly about the burglar, the bracelet, and the hunt by lantern-light.

The trinket of a princess was now upon Polly Dawson's arm, she having beseeched Gertrude to let her wear it during the forenoon at least. The owner eyed it gloomily and made plans. Even though it had been desecrated, she did not propose to abandon it to utter vandalism. She did not even intend that any vulgar modern craftsman should make copies of it.

When the moment was opportune, Miss Chalmers proposed to steal it. Of course she could never wear it again in the presence of the Witherbees or any of their guests; but she would possess it at any rate.

Breakfast was served on a broad porch at the rear of the house, which was the Witherbees' dining-room for all meals when the weather was fine. It was not yet finished when Miss Chal-

mers saw something as she glanced beyond the railing that fascinated her.

She stared fixedly, then brought her glance suddenly back to the table and furtively examined the faces of her hosts and fellow guests. After that she looked over the railing again. If she grew a shade paler, nobody appeared to observe the fact; nor did any one notice she had become restless.

After a minute or two she rose and walked toward the steps. They descended to a lawn that was broken with shrubs and flower-beds and paths.

"Where away, Rosalind?" called Gertrude.

"I want to see the garden," she called back.

But instead of making directly for the garden she followed a course closely parallel to the porch, which brought her to a pathway that led from a rear door of the house to a small outbuilding that served as a summer kitchen.

"Wait! Stop, Rosalind!"

She did not seem to hear, but stepped upon the path.

"You'll ruin your shoes!" cried Mrs. Witherbee. "That concrete was just laid yesterday. It's soft."

Miss Chalmers looked down at the path, then took a step forward as if to verify. Still unsatisfied, she tested the path once, twice, thrice, with her immaculate shoes. Then she turned and looked up at Mrs. Witherbee.

"Why, how stupid of me!" she exclaimed. "It *is* soft, isn't it?"

She moved toward the porch, treading again upon the slightly yielding surface. Then she stepped back upon the grass.

"I'm so sorry," she murmured. "I'm afraid I've marked your path."

She paused to study the footprints. There were nine distinct impressions in the concrete. One was slightly deeper than its mates.

"They won't notice that little difference," she reflected. "But I hope to Heaven nobody took the trouble to observe that I stepped on the path only eight times."

Then she wandered off into the garden, with a remark upon the unexplained magnetism that wet paint, particularly when so labeled, exercises upon meddlesome fingers.

(*Moral:* In order to cover your trail be the first to discover it—and then multiply.)

"It's rather exacting work," thought Miss Chal—

Wait a minute! This eternal "Miss Chalmers" is tiresome. We've known her for at least twelve hours; we're going to know her much better. Nearly everybody else is calling her "Rosalind." Why stand aloof?

"It's rather exacting work," thought Rosalind, "this business of arriving at unconventional hours and then making believe that everything was thoroughly conventional. If they don't stop talking about clues I shall go mad."

If there was one thing that particularly bored Rosalind it was discussion of a topic plunged into with undisguised relish by Mrs. Witherbee, when that good lady joined her in the garden and deftly maneuvered her beyond the hearing of the others.

"Is it seventeen now, my dear, or eighteen?" asked Mrs. Witherbee with a knowing little chuckle.

"Seventeen—or eighteen?" puzzled Rosalind. "I don't understand."

She did, however, because Mrs. Witherbee always approached the subject from the numerical angle.

"You know very well, my dear. Do not pretend. I thought the last one was the seventeenth, but Gertrude is sure he was the eighteenth. It was Mr. Williams, wasn't it?"

"Oh, please!" protested Rosalind.

"Oh, please?" echoed Mrs. Witherbee, hugging Rosalind's arm. "Oh, shucks, you mean! Why shouldn't we talk about it? Everybody else who knows you talks about it. Why shouldn't I?"

"But—but it's so intimately my own affair," said Rosalind, annoyed.

"It's more than your affair, dear.

It's the affair of seventeen or eighteen perfectly nice young men—I wish to goodness I could remember the exact count! Seventeen or eighteen eligible men—all ready to marry you if you say the word."

"All!" exclaimed Rosalind in a shocked tone. "Why, Mrs. Witherbee!"

"Well, you know what I mean," declared Mrs. Witherbee. "Of course you wouldn't marry them all. But it could be any one of the seventeen or eighteen. Now, couldn't it, Rosalind?"

Rosalind sighed, not because she was either romantic or pensive, but out of sheer despair.

"I presume it could be," she admitted.

"Oh, you heart-breaker!" chided Mrs. Witherbee confidentially.

"I'm not!" declared Rosalind stoutly. "There isn't a broken heart among them. Their hearts are all perfectly sound and serviceable. They're not only air-cooled, but water-jacketed, and not one of them ever had a misfire on my account."

"Rosalind! What in the world are you talking about?"

"Oh, well, please let's not talk about it any more. I can't stop them from asking me, can I?"

"No, but— Why, some of us wonder if you ever will be married!"

Rosalind shook her head wearily.

"Oh, I suppose I'll be married some day; most women are. Meantime, what's the use of considering and plotting and planning, or even bothering about it? When a girl wants to get married she can do it—any time. There's nothing mysterious or unprecedented about it. It's been done several times, I believe."

"You're so cynical, Rosalind."

"I'm not—not in the least. I'm merely sane. Listen, now! Whose voice is that? You seem to have callers."

"It sounds like Mr. Davidson," said Mrs. Witherbee, listening. "He's one

of our neighbors. Shall we go and see?"

They walked to the front of the house, where a group of persons stood in a circle around an elderly man who talked volubly.

"Come and listen to this," advised Mr. Witherbee, beckoning. "Davidson had a thief last night, too. Same one, probably. Miss Chalmers, let me present Mr. Davidson—one of our island neighbors."

Mr. Davidson bowed briefly, then resumed his recital in a voice that Rosalind remembered quite well.

"We thought he was all alone at first. He started up his launch, and then he had a breakdown. Thought I had him sure then. But, by jingo! Do you know there was another fellow lying out there in a rowboat? He was keeping watch, I suppose. The second chap climbed into the launch, and they managed to get things started again."

"Even then we'd have had 'em in a fair race. He cut loose his rowboat after a while, and we smashed into that; we didn't stop to pick up the splinters. That delayed us a little, of course."

"But he put one over on us by slipping through that channel that splits Houghton's Island. I wouldn't take a chance on it. By the time we went around the island he wasn't in sight."

"A pair of them, you said?" asked Mr. Witherbee.

"A whole gang, likely enough; but we saw only two. Don't know whether I hit any of 'em or not."

"Anything stolen?"

"Now, there's the queer part," affirmed Mr. Davidson. "Not a blessed thing, so far as we can discover, unless it was something out of the library that we haven't been able to locate as yet."

"He seemed to have spent all his time in the library, as nearly as I can find out. He had a lot of books out on the floor. Perhaps he thought we hid things behind them. We can't

find that he did anything except mess with the books."

If Rosalind was afire with curiosity she did not betray the fact. Outwardly she maintained the frigid poise that had been the despair of the seventeen or eighteen.

"Well, from your story," commented Mr. Witherbee, "he got to your place after he visited us. He had hard luck here; he lost something. Who's got the bracelet? Here, Polly! Show it to Mr. Davidson."

Polly held out her arm.

"If he hadn't visited us first I would have thought probably he stole it from your place," said Witherbee.

Mr. Davidson glanced at the bracelet and shook his head.

"Haven't got any junk like that in our house," he declared. "Never saw it before."

Rosalind flamed with resentment, but remained silent. Junk!

"We've got to organize; that's all," declared Witherbee.

"It's a cinch something's got to be done," growled Davidson. "I tell you, there's funny goings-on around this place. Earlier last night, for instance. We were coming down the river in the yacht when somebody hailed us from a small boat. One of 'em—sounded like a woman, too—wanted help. The other one—a man—didn't want any help. Seemed to be having a row among themselves, so I didn't butt in."

Rosalind was too bewildered to analyze the relation of this episode to what happened later. She merely made a mental note of the facts for future consideration.

A man in overalls approached Mr. Witherbee and touched his cap.

"One of the skiffs is gone, sir—the new one," he said.

"Then he did steal something, after all!" exclaimed Witherbee. "Isn't that the devil now? I suppose that was the skiff you ran down, Davidson."

"I suppose so," said Davidson gloomily. "Sorry."

"Oh, that's all right. Don't bother.

But, say, Davidson, you ought to do something for your own protection. Put in a burglar-alarm like ours, for instance."

"Burglar-alarm!" snorted Davidson. "What do I keep dogs for? And what good are the dogs, either? I threatened to shoot 'em last night. I'm not sure but I will, even yet. That rascally nephew of mine spoiled those dogs. They've been mooning around the place ever since I shipped him off to New York. By Judas! I'd bring him back if it wasn't for the fact that I'm getting good reports about him. Witherbee, he's actually making good! Had a letter from Hastings & Hatch only this morning. He'll be a regular banker some day, they tell me. Would you have ever thought that?"

"I never would," admitted Witherbee.

Rosalind wanted to slip away and think. She wanted to be undisturbed, so she might put together the pieces of the puzzle, which seemed to have been been jigsawed into hopeless confusion.

What she wanted most to know was just where she fitted into it. If there was to be serious burglar-hunting, if clues were being scattered about indiscriminately, she was considerably concerned as to where they might all lead.

When Mr. Davidson had apparently arrived at the end of his facts and was turning to comment and speculation she detached herself from the group and wandered off to the summer pavilion, which she had first found during the course of her exploration in the dark hours.

But she was not to be left alone. Mr. Morton, stroking his blond mustache, strolled in pursuit.

"Funny, by Jove! Isn't it, now?" he said. "Everybody chasing somebody, you know, and nobody catching anybody. I say it's confounded strange. What's your theory, Miss Chalmers?"

"I never theorize," said Rosalind shortly.

"Oh—ah—I see. Hum! Not a

bad plan, that, either; not at all bad. Saves one a whole lot of bother, I should think."

"Decidedly."

"Oh, yes, a lot of bother," he went on aimlessly. "But we can't all do it successfully, you know. Deuced difficult not to think about anything."

Rosalind's caution was uppermost. This drawling Morton person was somewhat enigmatic. She could not tell exactly why, but she was ill at ease.

Presently he seemed to remember something, for he turned toward the river, of which the summer pavilion commanded a sweeping view, took his field-glasses from his pocket, and devoted himself to another of those surveys at which she had surprised him in the early hours. Rosalind watched in silence.

"Not a sign," he observed after a long scrutiny.

"Of what?"

"I— Oh, I beg your pardon. Did not know I had spoken—really. Nothing at all, Miss Chalmers; nothing at all."

"Do you commonly look for nothing?"

"Had me there!" he exclaimed. "I suppose one doesn't really look for nothing, even if one expects nothing. Why—I—I was just looking for a boat; that's all. Nothing of importance, I assure you."

Rosalind's thoughts reverted to Sam, her burglarious boatman. What did this man know about him? Why had he questioned her so down on the wharf?

She was framing a guarded inquiry when Polly Dawson gurgled into the pavilion.

"Oh, Mr. Morton! I thought we were to play tennis this morning," she cried.

"Right you are!" he assented—with surprising alacrity, Rosalind thought. "Upon my word, I'd forgotten, Miss Polly. Awfully kind of you to look me up. You'll excuse me, Miss Chal-

mers? Or will you join us at the courts?"

"I think I'll excuse you," said Rosalind deliberately.

He stared for a brief instant.

"Why, yes; yes—of course. Awfully kind of you, too."

Polly Dawson had him by the arm and was insistently urging him in the direction of the courts. As they passed out of the pavilion Rosalind caught another glimpse of her bracelet. She gritted her teeth.

"Now, let's see just where I stand," she murmured to herself, and began checking off her thoughts on her fingers.

CHAPTER VI.

"PALS!"

A DIRTY gray boat, quite too large for a skiff, was being slowly propelled against the current with the aid of a pair of oars. The man who furnished the power was talking torridly to himself, to the boat, and to the oars, with occasional digressions in which he addressed himself to the river, the waning day, and the Goddess of Luck. He perspired a great deal more than he progressed.

Once he paused to wipe his forehead, an occupation which gave him opportunity to survey a near-by shore. Upon that shore he observed a lady walking. The lady was alone. The boatman smiled. He believed he could easily understand why the lady was alone, provided her tongue had not been paralyzed. He remembered it as a tongue that fended people off.

As he looked at the slowly moving figure it came to a halt. At the distance and in the dusk the boatman could not be sure that she was looking at him, yet he rested on his oars, waiting.

He saw something wave—a scarf or a handkerchief perhaps. He smiled again behind his shabby beard. Then he headed his boat toward the shore.

Not until he was close to the island did he turn his head, and then with the remark:

"Did you call me, ma'am?"

"What's the trouble now?" she asked sharply as a rejoinder.

"No trouble at all that I know of."

"Why are you rowing?"

"Oh! You mean about the boat? Why, my batteries have gone dead."

"How long since you replaced the cells?"

"I don't know. Maybe a year."

Rosalind Chalmers uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"I wish to be taken somewhere," she said. "It's important."

"I'll do my best to row you. How far is it—Europe?"

"I do not care to be rowed," she said. Her tone would have frozen mercury.

"Well, I'm headed for Clayton," he observed. "To buy some batteries. It's a long, long way; but if you'll be here until I get back I'll be at your service."

Rosalind considered briefly.

"If I find a set of cells for you," she said, "may I employ you for an hour or two?"

"Surest thing you know, ma'am."

"You'll wait here?"

"I'll not budge."

"Don't come to the dock," she warned.

"No fear."

She disappeared among the trees at a brisk walk, while the boatman edged his craft closer to the shore, made fast to a shelf of rock, and prepared to smoke. Twice he chuckled, once broke into a low laugh, as he sat in the stern of his launch, and waited.

As the dusk thickened he lighted a grimy lantern. Its dim, yellow rays illuminated the cockpit, and his eyes fell upon a book that lay on the floor. He reached for it, picked it up, and began a casual study of its pages.

There was one page, however, to which he reverted at frequent intervals, finally devoting his undivided at-

tention to a study of it. He was thus engaged when a light footstep caused him to drop the volume.

The lady was standing within a few feet of him, a bundle in her arms.

"Catch it!" she commanded.

It unrolled itself as it reached his arms, and half a dozen dry cells clattered to the floor of the cockpit. The wrapper that contained them was a light silk shawl. Almost simultaneously with the bundle Rosalind herself was aboard.

Sam, the boatman, picked up the nearest cell and examined it.

"Where 'd you get them?" he asked, looking up at her.

"None of your business," said Rosalind calmly. "I suggest that you put them to work at once."

He turned to the box that contained the dead batteries, disconnected the wires, and tossed the useless cells overboard. Then rather clumsily he began wiring the new cells into place.

Rosalind, seated opposite, watched the performance with impatience, but said nothing until he had nearly finished. Then it was:

"Don't you know better than to connect two positive poles? There—see—between the fourth and fifth cells."

He grinned without meeting her eyes and made the necessary change. Very quickly after that the launch was headed into the river, moving without the aid of oars.

"Nothing like having the master mechanic aboard," observed Sam as he refilled his pipe.

"Never presume to address me in that manner again," said Rosalind, turning swiftly upon him and drawing her skirt closer to her ankles.

"All right—Miss Chalmers—ma'am."

They ran on for several minutes in silence. Then he inquired indifferently:

"Which way did you say you wanted to go?"

"I didn't say. But"—her arm

pointed across the river—"you may take me in that direction until I tell you further."

"That's Rockport, on the Canadian side," he observed as he altered the course. "That place where you see the lights."

"Very well; head for it."

The launch moved onward for fifteen minutes, only the steady exhaust of the engine breaking the silence. The boatman smoked steadily and devoted the chief part of his time to a study of his passenger's profile. She seemed to be thoroughly oblivious of his presence.

Abruptly, when Witherbee's Island was a good two miles astern, she leaned forward and switched off the spark.

"This will do," she said.

Sam made a cursory observation of their position, which was midway in the broad Canadian channel. The nearest island was probably a mile distant.

"I desire to talk to you," she remarked, turning a calculating pair of eyes upon him. "The reason why we came here is that I did not care to be interrupted."

He nodded.

"I think I may as well tell you," she added, "that I have a pistol with me."

"Well, it might come handy if we meet anything," he admitted, not a trace of surprise in his voice.

Having reached this initial point in their conversation, Rosalind paused. She was perplexed as to the best way to begin. She was a little worried; but he must never suspect that.

A long afternoon hour of study over certain events in which she had been an actor since her embarkation at Clayton the night before had convinced her that it was highly desirable to know something more concerning this common person, who made such poor work of his avowed occupation as a boatman. Yet that was not exactly it, either; what she most wanted

to know was something concerning the plans and intentions of this person in case certain contingencies arose.

"Your name is Sam, I believe?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Sam what?"

"Oh, Sam anything. Whatever you say; I aim to please."

"You live here?"

"Hereabouts, ma'am."

"Of course you are a thief."

"You've said that before," he remarked placidly. "You said I was a burglar and a house-breaker, too."

"But you are!"

"Am I?"

Rosalind had no patience with people who fenced, but she checked her temper for the moment.

"After what I observed at an early hour this morning," she said, "I cannot see that there is any doubt of it. You entered and robbed—or attempted to rob—Mr. Davidson's house."

"Well," he said slowly, looking up at her, "I don't happen to be on the witness-stand. But I might remark that I didn't enter or attempt to enter Mr. Witherbee's house at any rate."

She flushed angrily; but she had learned something.

"Then you spied," she said.

He made a non-committal gesture.

"It's a matter of no importance," she added hastily. "I believe you understand that I am a guest at the Witherbees'."

"Of course," he assented. "I expect you explained the whole thing to them this morning."

She looked at him narrowly, but his face was impassive behind its beard. Nevertheless, she had a disquieting feeling that he suspected she had not explained anything—and did not care to explain.

"But you were simply a plain intruder at Mr. Davidson's," Rosalind went on.

"I haven't admitted it, ma'am."

"Oh, why quibble about it?" she exclaimed.

"All right, then; we won't quibble," he answered, after a second's thought. "We'll go to it a little bit straighter. I'll say this: I did land on Mr. Davidson's island. That 'll be enough for a while—except this: I wasn't working alone."

"You mean, there was somebody else who—"

"Always," remarked Sam confidentially, "when there's a house-breaking to be pulled off—that is, 'most always—a man doesn't work alone. He has to have one pal. If he does the inside work, his pal sticks around outside, doing lookout duty, and to help make the getaway. It's one of the most important parts of the job. Now, whatever I did or didn't do at Davidson's last night, the fact remained that I needed my pal a whole lot when it came to making a quick duck."

He paused and studied her, a faint twinkle in his dark eyes.

"You mean—"

Rosalind's voice was trembling.

"I mean that my pal started an engine that I couldn't have started in a year," he added complacently.

"You—you villain!"

"Ma'am?"

"You unspeakable scoundrel!"

Rosalind had risen to her feet. Her hand crept to a pocket in her sweater.

"You hit on a new name that time, ma'am."

"You dare to say," she exclaimed in an unsteady voice, "that I was in any way associated with—with—whatever you did at Mr. Davidson's?"

"Well, now, I haven't said so exactly. Only just try to look at it from the jury's angle."

Rosalind choked and sat down. Her fears—fears that she had been trying to smother all afternoon—were realized. This was blackmail!

The boatman continued to smoke, unruffled. There was silence for a full minute.

"I suppose we're all through talking," he observed finally.

"We are not!"

Rosalind's tongue was loosed again.

"What you have just hinted at is despicable, wicked—depraved! It's beyond belief. You are contemptible enough to take advantage of an entirely innocent situation to make trouble—for a woman! Of course, with you it's entirely a question of money. Therefore, how much?"

"How much for what?" he inquired mildly.

"For what! As if you didn't well know—"

"Never mind; I'll put the thing plainly, if you wish. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances, I engaged you as a boatman last night. Through a second series of circumstances it became impossible for me to announce my arrival at Mr. Witherbee's in the usual manner. Through still another series I had the misfortune to become involved in an affair which you very well know was none of mine.

"You are a thief; I am not. It happens, however, that I cannot afford to have my name in any way, either directly or indirectly, connected with the escapades of a burglar. The probability is, if you continue to remain in this neighborhood you will be captured. If that event does occur, you undoubtedly have it in mind to drag me into the affair. Therefore, how much?"

"How much to leave you out of it?"

"Exactly!"

He considered the proposal for a little.

"How much 'll you give?" he inquired cautiously.

Rosalind was nonplused. She was not versed in the payment of hush-money. She had no idea whatever concerning the usual rates of compensation.

"I haven't more than about fifty dollars with me," she said.

"Fifty, eh? Um! Well, now, suppose I say I don't want anything, ma'am?"

"You mean—"

"I mean if I took it, why, it would seem like cutting loose from a pal. And I don't—"

"You beast!"

"Another new one," he commented blandly.

"I have a mind—"

She paused midway in the sentence. She did not know what she had a mind to do, to tell the truth. Rosalind was completely dismayed. He meant to hold this thing over her; to terrorize her; perhaps—she turned cold at the thought—to attempt to employ her in some new lawless raid!

"Don't worry, ma'am," he said as if reading her thoughts. "I won't say a word to anybody. Lord! I wouldn't tell on you; I just *can't*, you see. That being the case, what's the use of my taking your money in that fashion and only creating bad feeling between us?"

The boldness of the fellow's assumption sickened her.

"Please allow me to pay," she said coldly.

He shook his head.

"We'll let it stand the way it is. I never squealed on a pal yet," he replied.

"I cannot remain under an obligation, no matter how unjust it may be," she declared in a firm voice. "I insist upon paying."

"There's no obligation, ma'am—not the least. The account's all square. I did the job; you made the getaway. It's a fifty-fifty proposition. I'm not doing you any favor."

Rosalind was in a white fury. Her fingers curled around the stock of the little automatic in her pocket, although she knew quite well she would not employ the weapon. This creature called her his—pal! Called her—a Chalmers—by a vulgar name from his underworld! And she was helpless!

"You may take me back," she commanded suddenly.

"Right!"

He started the engine, swung the boat in a wide circle, and laid a course

for Witherbee's Island. They had covered half of the return journey before she spoke again. Then:

"I may as well warn you that they are preparing to make a thorough hunt for the thief, and that the residents are about to organize, and probably to employ detectives."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"You may act accordingly or not, as you choose."

"It's very kind of you," he said humbly. "I'm sure you show the right spirit, ma'am. That's the way it ought to be between—"

Rosalind whirled upon him.

"Don't you ever dare to employ that word to me again!"

"Oh, all right," he sighed. "I just meant to be neighborly."

It was some minutes later when she observed:

"I might add that one of the gentlemen staying with Mr. Witherbee is already on the watch for you."

The boatman looked surprised.

"He uses a pair of glasses to keep track of you."

"What's his name?"

"Mr. Morton."

An exclamation from the steersman.

"Morton—the Englishman?"

"Evidently you know him."

"N-no; I don't exactly know him. But I know who you mean. Tall man, yellow mustache?"

Rosalind nodded.

"Hum!" said Sam reflectively.

"How long has he been at Witherbee's?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"He's spoken of me, has he?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"Why, nothing, really; except that he asked some questions in order to identify you and said he had seen you. I told him you had brought me down."

"Did you tell him when I brought you?" inquired the boatman.

"Well, I said—or perhaps I let him infer—that you brought me down this morning."

Sam laughed quietly.

"That's an alibi that might do nicely for both of us," he commented. "Much obliged. Did he mention my name?"

"He knows that you are called Sam," said Rosalind shortly.

"I see. Quite a chap, isn't he, don't you know?"

The voice of the boatman was rather satirical.

"And I'll tell you something else," she continued. "Mr. Davidson is convinced there is some queer work going on here, and he mentioned a boat hailing him last night while he was out in his yacht."

"So you've found out it was Davidson's yacht, then?"

"I have."

Sam seemed to find cause for gentle mirth.

"I think I can now understand," she added, "why you refused to let him help us. Even a burglar may have a certain delicacy about accepting a favor from his intended victim."

"That might be true," he admitted.

They were approaching Witherbee's Island when Rosalind's glance fell upon a book that lay open on the floor of the cockpit. Idly she picked it up and glanced at the cover. It was a copy of Hamersly's "Social Register."

For an instant she stared at the title with astonished eyes. Not that the volume was strange to her; far from that. Rosalind Chalmers was thoroughly acquainted with this most exclusive of all publications that list the names of the families who are really and truly entitled to enter the social holy of holies. What amazed her was the presence of the volume in such an uncouth environment. She turned to the fly-leaf. Thereon was written in a bold hand:

HENRY DAVIDSON.

She looked at the boatman. He was intent upon a course that would land them at the point where Rosalind had embarked upon her baffling voyage.

Davidson! This, then, was the explanation of the rummaged library! This—a Social Register—constituted the booty of a thief!

Again she ventured a glance at Sam. He did not appear to notice that she had picked up the book.

Her fingers marked the spot at which the volume lay open. Now she turned to the page. Rosalind gasped softly when she found herself among the C's—yes, and at that very page among the C's that listed the habitat, the personnel, and the lineage of the Chalmers family of New York!

The book dropped from her hands and thudded gently upon the flooring. A sensation of vague alarm succeeded her initial amazement.

What was the creature planning now?

As the boat touched the island she leaped ashore quickly, and started in the direction of the house.

"Wait, please!" called the boatman.

She halted.

"I guess you forgot something, didn't you?" he said.

"Forgot? Oh—you mean I am to pay you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How much?"

Her purse was in her hand.

"Only five this time."

She handed him the money without a word.

"Any other time you want a boat," he observed, "you can find me 'most anywhere."

"I suppose," she said frigidly, "that that is part of the price—of silence?"

"I didn't put it that way," he answered good-naturedly. "But I certainly do like to have a handy passenger on board."

She was moving away when he halted her again.

"By the way, Miss Chalmers, you might tell me something. Once in a while this old bunch of junk they call an engine seems to get all heated up over nothing at all, even when she's

not running fast. Now, when she does that, ought I to—"

"Hire a mechanic!" she said sharply.

"That's what I thought," he drawled. "I'll be looking you up real soon at that rate."

Rosalind was gone.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW SLANTS.

THE boatman, after swinging well clear of Witherbee's Island, hesitated as to his course. "There might be an answer to-night," he muttered. "Still, it's pretty quick, seeing I only wired this morning. I guess I'll wait until to-morrow. I'll be sure to hear then."

Without further ado he headed the launch into the channel that runs between Wellesley and Hill islands, following a course so nearly midway between them that the wake of his craft would have served as a visible boundary-line between the United States and Canada. Several motor-boats passed him, one hailed sharply, warning him to show lights. He paid no attention, but steadily held his way.

Half an hour of running brought him opposite a small, dark spot on the water, around which he described a half-circle while he kept his eyes intently upon it. Then, apparently satisfied, he headed in toward what proved to be a rocky, wooded island.

There was a natural landing-place at the point he touched—a cove protected on three sides by bulwarks of the gneiss rock that rises stalwart, here as elsewhere, out of the great St. Lawrence.

Making fast his craft, he stepped ashore, and followed a narrow path that struggled over the stony surface, beset on either side by underbrush and small trees.

The path ended at a cabin. He pushed open a door, entered, searched about in the darkness for a moment,

then struck a match and lighted the wick of a lantern that stood on a table in the center of the single room.

The cabin was clean, plain, and cheerless. There was a cot in one corner, a small iron stove, a shelf with a few cooking-utensils, and one chair.

"No place like home," he commented with a grin. "And I suppose I'll be kicked out of here if anybody gets wise."

He helped himself to a few crackers from a tin box on the shelf, sat down, and began munching them in an absent-minded manner. Presently his wandering glance fixed itself upon a broken mirror that hung from a nail driven into one of the walls. He picked up the lantern, advanced across the cabin, and held the light so that he could survey himself in the glass.

"You're a nice-looking object," he assured his reflection as one hand stroked his beard. "I've got a mind—"

A lidless cigar-box nailed against the wall contained a razor, a lather-brush, and half a cake of soap. He picked up the razor and once more studied himself in the mirror.

"No," he said, shaking his head slowly as he returned the razor to its place. "Don't get foolish. You can't be useful and beautiful at the same time."

He replaced the lantern on the table and went to the cot, where he stretched himself on the gray blankets and lay staring up at the roof-boards for many minutes. The boatman's thoughts were apparently amusing, for once he laughed aloud, while many times he chuckled.

"That was a close go last night," he remarked, addressing himself to a knot-hole, through which, by a little maneuvering of his head, he could focus a brilliant star. "Just a little closer and they'd have had me. It was the master mechanic who did the trick.

"Some mechanic, too! A pal worth having, that lady—a sort of lucky strike, it looks to me. She's not gentle

exactly, with that tongue of hers; but she's all there when it comes to getting action. Had a gun in her pocket, too."

He laughed again.

"A gun—for poor Sam!" he added. "Guess I'll have to be careful. And yet—"

"No, sir! I'm not going to lose sight of this proposition. It looks too good to me. And right on the same island, by jiminy! Couldn't be planted better—for me. Why, she's just got to be a pal!"

Presently he closed his eyes and made an effort to sleep, a task which he abandoned with suddenness after five minutes.

"No use; I'm too curious," he muttered, rising. "I'm going up to Clayton. It might happen to have come in."

He blew out the light and walked from the cabin, making his way back to where the launch was moored. A moment later he was backing out of the cove. Then he headed northward, through the narrowing waterway that led him past Swiftwater Point, and then along the channel that sweeps the shore of Wellesley Island.

Abreast of the lights of Grand View he swung almost due south and laid a course for Clayton, making the briefest possible détours to avoid the islands that lay in his path.

At Clayton he sought a small, obscure wharf, to which he made fast the launch. His excursion into town carried him upon none of the principal thoroughfares, but wound an irregular course through back streets, until he found himself at a small, poorly lighted frame building that served the double purpose of hotel and saloon.

He entered by a side door, took a seat at a table in a dingy corner of a back room and rapped smartly with his knuckles on the pine top. There was a shuffling of feet in the barroom and a man appeared through a swinging door, wiping his hands on a dirty apron as he came.

"Hello, Sam!" he said.

"Anything come?" asked the boatman abruptly.

For answer the man in the apron began a search of his pockets, finally producing a folded yellow envelope. The boatman reached for it quickly and ran his finger under the flap of the envelope.

"Ginger ale," he said briefly without looking up.

The bearer of the message went back to the barroom to fill the order.

As Sam's eyes read the telegram they widened perceptibly. He smiled faintly, then nodded, carefully placed the telegram and its envelope in the pocket of his shirt, and looked up at the returning bearer of his drink.

"Everything O. K., I hope," observed the man in the apron, as he stood a glass and a bottle on the table.

"O. K.," confirmed Sam. "I might have to have another message sent here. Will it be all right?"

"Sure; as many as you like. It ain't costing me anything."

The boatman drank his ginger ale hastily, threw a quarter on the table, and went out.

Now, whistling softly and complacently, he strolled through a more pretentious part of the town, halting occasionally to examine store windows. He entered one place, made some trivial purchases, and offered in payment therefor a five-dollar bill that had until recently reposed in the purse of the master mechanic.

"Yep; a mighty useful pal," he murmured as he gathered up his change.

"How's that?" asked the storekeeper.

"I was just telling myself that money is a man's best friend," said the boatman as he strolled out.

The storekeeper watched the departing customer, then turned to the cash-drawer and made a second examination of the five-dollar note.

Sam made his way directly to the wharf where he had moored his

launch, stepped aboard and made ready to cast off. Then he bethought himself of his engine.

"Needs oil, I guess. The master mechanic would give me the dickens if she knew how long I've run without filling the cups," he chuckled.

Forward under the half-deck he kept a gallon can. Now he got upon his hands and knees and crawled part way into the dark hole, groping ahead of him as he went.

There was nothing tidy nor methodical in the arrangement of his ship's stores, so he spent a full minute, feeling about, before his hand came in contact with the oil-can. Then as he was backing from his cramped quarters a scraping sound attracted his attention. Another launch had touched the wharf.

Something impelled the boatman to remain quietly where he lay in the bottom of his craft. Perhaps it was the guarded note in the voice of a man who was talking.

"I knew it wouldn't do any good to go out to-night," said the voice.

"Well, it helped us to get the lay of the place a bit at any rate," answered a second voice.

"But I don't believe the stuff is coming out through Gananoque at all. And I'm not satisfied that it's coming in here, either."

"Where do you think it's coming from?"

"Kingston."

"That wasn't the tip from Washington."

"I know that. But Kingston's a lot more likely. It's bigger, and that's some advantage when you don't want folks to notice you too much."

"And where do you think it's coming in?"

"Oh, blazes! How can we tell yet? There's a dozen places anywhere along here for twenty or thirty miles. And you can bet it doesn't come across in the same place twice."

The boatman breathed softly and lay clasping his oil-can. The men in

the other launch were making their boat fast now.

"You're dead sure Washington's not just guessing about this?" observed the second speaker, a note of doubt in his voice. "Not that I mind sticking around a nice place like this for a while, but I'd like to show something for my time."

"They've got to do a certain amount of guessing, of course," said the other. "But it's not all guess. They're getting the thing fairly well located, and it's ciphering down to this part of the river. We know mighty well that Canada isn't beginning to use, not by half, the diamonds that have been shipped in from Antwerp. They're getting across the line, to a certainty. There was a bunch of stuff got into New York last week, and the man who brought it had a railroad ticket that read from Clayton. We're still holding the stuff, but we can't prove anything yet."

"Maybe there's a half-way joint out here."

"You mean on one of the islands? I've had that in mind. That's one reason I hired the boat. We'll do a little sightseeing to-morrow and get some new bearings."

The talkers were on the little wharf now. Sam pressed his body close against the flooring of the cockpit.

"Well, I'm tired," said one. "Let's go on up to bed. It's all right to leave the boat here, is it?"

"That's what the man said. It's his dock."

Footsteps passed close to the boatman's craft.

"There's a boat come in since we were here," commented a voice. "He didn't mind hogging the best part of the dock either, did he?"

The second man laughed as the pair went on up the sloping gangway that led to the shore.

Sam lay motionless until they were gone from his hearing, then cautiously rose to his knees and made an observation. The men were out of sight.

He crawled aft, put down the oil-can and sat for several minutes, motionless, considering carefully the fruits of his eavesdropping.

"So they've got their eye on the islands, have they?" he thought. "Interesting, that. I wonder—"

He laughed softly.

"Why not?" he asked himself after another period of thought. "It may not be a bit of use to Uncle Sam, but it just might happen to make his humble namesake real happy."

He stepped out on the wharf and went up the gangway, at the head of which he stood listening and watching for a moment until he was assured that the arrivals in the second launch were safely out of the way. Then he returned to his craft, lighted the lantern, and squatted beside it on the floor.

From a small locker at his hand he took Hamersly's "Social Register" and tore out a fly-leaf. A stub of lead-pencil appeared from one of his pockets. Using the book as a desk, the boatman began to write.

He paused occasionally in this occupation, squinting his eyes and frowning as if puzzled over a thought or a phrase. When he had come nearly to the end of his sheet of paper he stopped writing, read his composition carefully by the dim light, and nodded an approval.

Now he climbed back to the float again and crossed to where the second launch lay. It was a trim, well-kept little craft, a fact that he noted with an involuntary sigh when he thought of his own. There was a canvas cover that fitted neatly over the engine; this had been put in place carefully. He stepped into the cockpit, lifted one side of the canvas and thrust his note underneath it.

"They can't miss that," he remarked, as he retreated to his own craft.

Immediately following, he loosed his mooring, started his engine, and backed out into the river.

It was late when the dingy launch rested once more in the rock-bound cove and the boatman walked up to his cabin. He was whistling gently and cheerfully, a lantern swinging in his hand. Entering the cabin and closing the door behind him, he drew the chair up to the table, fished the Social Register out of his pocket, and began another absorbed study of the C's.

"That's some family, believe me," he commented. "Strong on the May-flower stuff, I notice. Been here ever since there was a New York. Pipe the old man's club-list! Not so big, maybe, but class—whew! And the missus—oh, yes; she's a Daughter, all right—three or four kinds of a Daughter. Fifth Avenue, Newport, Narragansett—uh-huh. That's the stuff!

"Mentions the yacht, too. I wonder how many limousines. I suppose the master mechanic takes care of those.

"And—well, well, look who's here! Brother C. Alfred. Fell down a bit on brother's name, it strikes me. 'Alfred' doesn't quite class up. Ought to be either very flossy or very plain; that's the way most of 'em seem to run. But I notice Alfred is there with the Harvard thing. And all of papa's clubs, too.

"And here's grandfather, and great-grandfather, and the rest of 'em back of that. And mother—she's a Van Arsdale. That's nice; that's bully! She kicks in with some considerable ancient lineage herself."

He grinned at the Chalmers page.

"Ah! And now the Lady Rosalind! They don't tell ages in this book, do they? Don't put the price-tags on, either. Rosalind—well, she just can't help it when you come to study the dope-sheet. On form, I'd back the Lady Rosalind to be a front runner in any company. Ow! Nothing like class—and nothing to it but class!"

The boatman bethought himself of the telegram stowed away in his pock-

et. Now he examined it again. He sat back in his chair and laughed until that article of furniture creaked.

"Time to go to bed," he said, rising abruptly. "To-morrow may be a right busy day. Who knows?"

He was crawling under his blankets when another thought came to him. Returning to the table, he tore from the Social Register the sacred page devoted to the house of Chalmers. It was closely printed, with marginal notes and annotations.

"I'm going to start a picture-gallery, just to brighten up the shack," he told himself.

After a careful study of the four walls of his cabin, he selected a spot directly opposite the door, and there he securely fastened the printed page into place with pins. Beneath it he affixed the telegram, which had come to him from New York, addressed only to "Sam," and in care of the obscure little hotel where he had found it awaiting him. The telegram said:

Five million. Unattached. Bidding brisk.

There was no signature.

The boatman stepped back, surveyed his work, and grinned. Then he darted to a corner shelf, devoted to a motley collection of odds and ends, and returned with a piece of chalk. Underneath the page from Hamersly's and its appended telegram he printed in bold letters:

PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHO COPPED THE BUZZ-STUFF?

MR. WITHERBEE dashed out on the porch, mopping his brow, although the morning was yet cool. The company paused at breakfast.

"Again, by Judas!" he shouted, glaring at his wife.

Mrs. Witherbee half rose from her chair and looked apprehensive.

"Again?" she echoed.

"Yes, again! Burglars!"

"Stephen!"

Mrs. Witherbee sat down abruptly and began fanning herself with a napkin.

"That's what I said—burglars!"

The master of the house rolled his eyes and breathed heavily.

"Is—is anything stolen?" asked Polly Dawson faintly.

"Stolen? Yes!" cried Mr. Witherbee so fiercely that his smallest guest shrank from him.

The company sat silent, wide-eyed.

"They've stolen the burglar-alarm!"

"Stephen!"

"Don't Stephen me! I tell you they've stolen it!"

"Upon my soul!" said Mr. Morton, putting down his tea.

"But who—how—when?"

The questions descended upon Mr. Witherbee in a volley.

"Who? How the blazes do I know? How? Why, just took it, of course. How does anybody steal anything? When? When nobody was looking, madam. That's my conclusion."

Mr. Witherbee glared truculently at his spouse.

"But why didn't the thing go off?" asked Gertrude in a mystified voice.

"It did! It's gone!" shouted her father.

"All the wires, father? And the gong? Why, I noticed the gong myself as I came down-stairs."

"I didn't say the wires and the gong!" stormed Mr. Witherbee. "You don't have to steal them to steal a burglar-alarm. I mean, they copped the works—the buzz-stuff—the juice!"

"Stephen," protested his wife, still fanning herself, "that kind of speech doesn't—"

"What's speech got to do with this, madam? This is no time for speech; this is a time for talk! Do you understand that? Talk! I say they've stolen the works!"

"Dad means the batteries, mother,"

explained Tom Witherbee, rising. "Let's go and see."

The breakfast-party followed him into the house, Mr. Witherbee storming noisily at the rear.

"There! Look for yourselves, if you don't believe me!" he cried.

Each member of the party, in turn, looked into the coat-closet under the front stairway. A small shelf in a corner had been built to hold six dry cells. It was bare of anything save dust now. Two wire connections projected uselessly from the wall.

Mr. Witherbee's guests looked at each other in silence.

"Now, who the deuce would do a thing like that?" said Tom Witherbee tentatively, when the pause had become prolonged.

"Who, indeed?" murmured Rosalind.

She was staring at the empty shelf as if it had a peculiar fascination for her.

"What I can't understand," said Mrs. Witherbee, "is why a burglar would want to steal the batteries out of a burglar-alarm."

"Why, madam?" exploded her husband, whirling upon her. "Why? Anybody knows why! Why does a burglar poison a watch-dog? To keep it from barking. Why does a burglar chloroform a family? To keep 'em from waking up! Why does he steal the works out of an alarm? To keep the bell from ringing, madam. Lord Harry, it's plain enough!"

"That does sound rather reasonable," assented Rosalind, still fascinated by the empty shelf.

"They're getting ready for a raid, I tell you—a raid on the house!" declared Mr. Witherbee furiously. "They're just paving the way. And when they come—by George—there'll be nothing to wake us up!"

Mrs. Witherbee shivered.

"But, Stephen," she said, wrinkling her forehead in puzzlement, "if they could get into the house to steal the batteries so as to make ready for a

raid, why didn't they raid the house, instead of stealing the batteries?"

"That's a problem, too," commented Rosalind. "How do you account for it, Mr. Witherbee?"

"Account for it?" His flashing glance went from his wife to Rosalind, then back again. "Why should I account for it? I'm not a burglar. It takes a thief to know why! The point is, it's been done—that's all."

"It's cursedly odd," said Mr. Morton, as he stroked his yellow mustache.

Mr. Witherbee glared at his guest, opened his mouth to say something, then made a helpless gesture and remained silent.

"You just noticed this, dad?" asked Tom.

"When I went to get a hat."

"Did you ask any of the servants about it?"

"No! What would a servant want with an electric battery? If you're going to ask me if I suspect my servants, I'll tell you no—right now, sir."

"Father's right, Tom," said his mother. "The servants are perfectly trustworthy."

"Of course they're trustworthy!" snapped Mr. Witherbee. "They're also deaf, dumb, and blind—*non compos mentis* and plain dotty. But they're honest. Anybody might walk in here and steal the plaster off the walls without getting caught. Yes, and for all your servants might know, steal you out of bed, madam!"

"Mercy, Stephen!" exclaimed his wife faintly. "Don't suggest such a thing!"

"We can get more batteries, father," said Gertrude soothingly.

"Batteries! Of course we can get batteries. And what's to prevent anybody from stealing the new ones?"

"I tell you, the whole neighborhood's overrun with thieves. First it's us, rung out of our sleep in the middle of the night; then it's Davidson; then it's us again. Now it's his turn. After that they'll probably steal the island."

Rosalind, abandoning her study of

the empty shelf, went back to the deserted breakfast-table and resumed her grapefruit.

"I had no idea," she murmured softly, "that they worked the burglar-alarm. I thought they worked the door-bell. But—I'm glad!"

Rosalind was the only person who did not finish breakfast in desultory fashion. She ate deliberately and contentedly. There were no disturbing symptoms in her conscience. She was revenged—revenged for the shock of the midnight alarm, for the flight in the darkness, for the knee that bumped itself on the chair, for the night in the boat-house, for a gown that would never be worn again; yes, for everything save the bracelet. That was adorning the arm of Gertrude this morning.

But she would be revenged for that, too, she told herself. And when Rosalind Chalmers promised herself anything, she was a patient and persistent performer.

"What in the world are you laughing at, Rosalind?" asked Mrs. Witherbee.

"Was I laughing? It was rather rude of me. But a burglar-alarm seems such a funny thing to steal. Think of stealing a noise!"

"To tell you the truth, my dear," said Mrs. Witherbee, after making sure that her husband was not within hearing, "I'm glad the old batteries are gone. They frightened me nearly to death night before last. Of course, I don't like to have thieves about; but if they must come, I'd much prefer they'd let me sleep."

Tom and his sister, Polly Dawson and Mr. Morton were playing tennis; Fortescue Jones and the Perkins young man were smoking cigarettes, and the two Winter girls were knitting for the Belgians, when Mr. Witherbee hove in sight, leading a reluctant dog. There was a general suspension of industry.

"Where'd you get that, dad?" asked Tom.

"Been over to Davidson's in the launch," said Mr. Witherbee. "Here! Buck up—Rover, Prince, Fido—what the deuce did he say your name was, anyhow? Hold you head up; get that tail out. Some dog—eh?"

"What's he for?"

"Burglars."

Rosalind checked a smile and stroked the ears of the cringing animal.

"Is he well recommended?" she asked.

"Well, I wouldn't exactly say that," answered Mr. Witherbee, as he regarded the beast frowningly. "Davidson says he isn't worth a hoot. But he thought maybe if he was kept on a strange place where he doesn't feel at home, he might get fierce again. So I don't want any of you to make friends with him. I'm going to put him on short rations until he gets a mean opinion of everybody."

"He doesn't seem as if he ever had been fierce," observed Rosalind, as the dog thrust his muzzle into her palm.

"He's got a pedigree," declared Mr. Witherbee as he dragged the animal away from the friendly hand. "His father bit a man once, so Davidson says. And one of his brothers got killed in a fight. He's got the stuff in him, if there's any way to bring it out."

"You mean to say, Stephen," remarked Mrs. Witherbee severely, "that you propose to train that animal to bite us?"

"Not us, madam; certainly not! I mean to train him to bite burglars."

"Of course," said Tom Witherbee, as he walked back to the tennis-court, "he'll need a practise bite now and then. Wait and see if dad doesn't call for volunteers."

"All right, young man!" snorted his father. "The amount of interest you show in protecting your mother, your sister, and myself is no credit to you. But let me tell you, sir, that other persons hereabouts are realizing the seriousness of this situation. We are organizing. Davidson has called a

meeting at his island to-night. There will probably be a dozen owners there. We're going to do something about this thing, you can gamble on that. We'll probably establish a patrol. I expect some of the Canadian owners will come in on it, too."

"The international navy at last!"

"Shut up, Tom! Here, you beast—come on!"

Mr. Witherbee disappeared around the corner of the house, dragging the dog behind him.

Rosalind, having succeeded in discouraging the attempts of Fortescue Jones to explain just why the fox trot represented more foot-tons of energy per mile than the one-step, managed to escape alone for a stroll about the island.

She was not particularly interested either in her hosts or their guests. But she endured that patiently. What really annoyed her was the persistence with which her mind reverted to Sam, the boatman.

The uproar over the batteries had merely served to rekindle the matter. She was by no means at peace when she thought of the uncouth navigator and his slatternly boat. He not only puzzled, but vaguely disturbed her.

Of course, for his own safety, she felt well assured he would attempt to cause her no annoyance; and yet the foundation for possible embarrassments and unwelcome explanations was there. She was not a law-breaker, to be sure; but the boatman emphatically was. And in some measure it seemed that she had been an accomplice.

The rack and thumb-screw could not have extorted confession from Rosalind concerning some of the things that had happened. But the difficulty lay in the fact that the boatman, if he chose, could render her own confession superfluous. And what might he not do, if caught, to save his own neck?

She was particularly annoyed when she remembered the interview that had been of her own seeking. The

result, so far as she was concerned, had been rather inglorious. He had even laughed at her! He had refused the bribe she offered; he would put no price on his silence.

And he had called her a pal! Her cheeks went hot when she remembered that.

Down at the Witherbee wharf, Rosalind sat and idly watched a small power-boat that stood a mile off the island, evidently irresolute as to destination. It was not until it finally laid an unmistakable course for the Witherbee place that her interest was awakened.

When the boat reached the landing, one of the two men who occupied it lifted his cap and inquired if it was Mr. Witherbee's Island. Being assured that it was, the men fastened their craft, stepped out, and went up the path toward the house, the direction of which Rosalind had indicated with a gesture.

Half an hour or so later they returned, Mr. Witherbee with them. All three were talking volubly. One of the strangers held a paper in his hand.

Rosalind, whose eyes were keen, deciphered two words that were written in a bold hand on one side of the sheet. Her pulse quickened, but that was the only manifestation of the excitement which the paper produced in her.

After a moment of talk on the wharf, the two men embarked, thanked Mr. Witherbee, and went on their way.

"That's a funny go," said her host, turning to her.

Rosalind raised her eyebrows in polite curiosity.

"American customs agents," explained Mr. Witherbee. "Looking for diamond-smugglers. It seems there's been a good deal of it going on. Last night somebody left an anonymous letter in their boat. That's what brought them down here."

"Here?"

"They didn't show me the whole thing, but it contained some sort of a hint about Mr. Morton."

"Mr. Morton?"

"Uh-huh! Ridiculous, of course; I told them so. I think I satisfied 'em on that score. They said, of course, they were compelled to look up every possible clue.

"They didn't think of accusing Morton of anything. Just wanted to know something about him; that was all. I introduced him. They didn't seem to take much stock in whatever the letter said."

"Of course not," agreed Rosalind.

"But here's the queerest part. On the back of the paper was the name of Mr. Davidson. They went over to his island before they came here and showed it to him. And Davidson said that it was his own handwriting!"

"How curious! Of course he didn't know anything about the note?"

"Not a thing in the world. The note was written in lead-pencil in an entirely different hand. But there was his name on the back of it. It looks like a half-sheet of paper torn off from the other part. Davidson acknowledges the signature, and that's every blessed thing he knows about it. Now, wouldn't that get you?"

"It would," admitted Rosalind, forgetting her abhorrence of slang.

"I tell you I'm glad I got the dog," declared Mr. Witherbee as he went off muttering.

Rosalind was content to be alone again for a little. She knew where she had seen the piece of paper before; she remembered very distinctly the boatman's copy of Hamersly's "Social Register."

But smuggling! That was something brand-new to consider.

What did he know about smuggling unless he smuggled himself? In Rosalind's mind he began to appear as something more than a common thief. A little seemed to have been added to his stature.

What perplexed her most of all, however, was the reference to Morton, the Englishman.

Why Morton? Why had the boat-

man furnished Morton's name to a pair of customs officers? Perhaps a crude ruse to divert suspicion from himself, thought Rosalind; yet that theory did not satisfy her.

She was not quite sure that the boatman was crude in his methods, no matter how hopelessly ignorant he might be concerning gasoline engines. Now she remembered Morton's survey of the river, watching for Sam's boat; also, she recollected the questioning of Sam as to the Witherbees' guest.

What did these two know about each other?

Rosalind sensed a suddenly awakened interest in the Englishman, who had occupied a very minor place in her thoughts up to the present. She resolved to satisfy her curiosity, so, rising from her seat on the wharf, she went briskly up to the house.

Mrs. Witherbee, also a Belgian knitter, was in a corner of the porch. Rosalind dropped into a seat beside her. For a few minutes she watched the tennis-players, then remarked indifferently:

"Mr. Morton plays a rather strong game, don't you think?"

"Well, I don't understand tennis," said Mrs. Witherbee; "but they tell me he does. He's a rather interesting man."

"Is he?"

"Don't you find him so, my dear?"

"I hadn't thought about it," answered Rosalind. "You've known him for some time?"

"No, we haven't," said Mrs. Witherbee. "He's been here most of the summer, but he's only been with us a few weeks. He was Mr. Davidson's guest at first. He's an old friend of Mr. Davidson, it seems. That's how we came to meet him.

"Stephen took a fancy to him and invited him over here. I imagine he was glad of the chance, because things were rather slow over at Davidson's without any young people, particularly after Billy Kellogg went away."

"Billy Kellogg?"

"Mr. Davidson's nephew. A nice

boy, but an idler. You probably heard his uncle mention the fact that he was working in New York. Mr. Davidson forced him to. The straw that broke the camel's back, it seems, was when Billy lost a big sum of money playing bridge with Mr. Morton. That disgusted his uncle."

"But didn't Mr. Davidson feel any resentment against Mr. Morton for having won his nephew's money?" asked Rosalind.

"Apparently not," said Mrs. Witherbee, knitting busily. "You see, men are funny about those things. Mr. Davidson said if it hadn't been Morton it would have been somebody else, and that it was all a fair gamble. But he was furious at his nephew for losing."

"And now he gets reports from the banking-firm every day, telling him how finely the boy is getting on. And that's how, in a roundabout sort of way, we got Mr. Morton. Rather distinguished-looking, isn't he, dear?"

Rosalind shrugged her shoulders and watched the tennis-player.

"Of course he's dreadfully English," added Mrs. Witherbee; "but he can't help that. And his name—it's Evelyn! Stephen thinks it's the funniest thing he ever heard—H. Evelyn Morton."

"But he likes him, just the same. Everybody does. You will, my dear. Why, Rosalind, you can't tell but he just might be the one who—"

"I think I'll go up-stairs and take a nap," said Rosalind hastily. "I have a slight headache."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASCENDING SCALE.

ROSALIND did not have a headache, and she did not take a nap. Instead, when she had closed the door of her room she faced herself in the mirror.

"You are becoming a great liar," she said bluntly.

With the fidelity of a movie, the

image in the mirror returned the compliment.

"On second thought," said Rosalind, "I withdraw that. You are not becoming a great liar—you *are* a great liar."

The lips of the animated image assured her that the amendment was accepted.

"You have lied about little things, big things, foolish things, serious things—everything. I detest lying. It is cowardly, vulgar, and demoralizing. Worse than that, it's troublesome. But"—she sighed softly—"occasionally it is necessary."

She turned abruptly away from the image, went to a writing-desk, and spent several minutes with a pen and a sheet of paper. When she had reviewed her composition with care, she folded it into small compass, slipped it into a vanity-box, and snapped the lid smartly.

"That's just to make sure," she murmured. "I suppose there will be more later."

After that she sat passively by the window for fifteen minutes, appearing to watch the tennis-players, yet devoting her complete attention to her thoughts.

Smuggling, of course, was not so bad as burglary, she reflected. Lots of excellent people smuggled—not in a really vicious way, and not with the least hint of sinister intent; it was just a sort of sporting proposition. They did not smuggle for a living, or even for incidental profit; they were not professionals.

She knew a lot of perfectly amiable, well-bred, and charming smugglers, who smuggled a trifle now and then for the excitement of beating the game. There was herself, for instance.

But professional smuggling was different, she told herself severely. And when it was coupled with burglary, it assumed a serious aspect. She would not permit herself to be lenient in this. Yet she was intensely curious.

If Sam was a smuggler as well as

a burglar, who was H. Evelyn Morton? What did Sam know about Morton, and what did the Englishman know about Sam?

Of course, it was natural for Sam to attempt to divert suspicion from himself. But why throw it upon Morton?

"If it wasn't for the smuggling part I think I could understand," mused Rosalind. "If Mr. Morton won all this money from Mr. Davidson's nephew, I suppose it has been a matter of some talk. Probably this boatman has learned of the fact, and is merely waiting for an opportunity to rob Mr. Morton. And Mr. Morton probably has his suspicions, and is keeping a watch upon Sam for his own protection. That's perfectly reasonable.

"But, then, why should Sam try to get Mr. Morton into trouble, and probably thereby spoil his own chance of robbing him? I can't understand that, unless he is incredibly stupid. And—he isn't stupid."

At the end of her fifteen-minute study Rosalind made a resolution and went down-stairs to see about executing it. She contrived, with no great expenditure of effort, to detach Mr. Morton from his tennis.

"Don't you think," said Rosalind, "that it would be great fun to go fishing?"

"Upon my word, I never gave it a thought," said Mr. Morton. "But I believe you're right, you know, Miss Chalmers."

"Then let's."

"From the wharf?"

"No! That's a stupid place."

"We'll try the point, then."

"No!"

Mr. Morton looked puzzled.

"We must get a boat," explained Rosalind.

"Oh!"

"A boat and a boatman who knows where there is good fishing to be found."

He considered the idea for a moment.

"I—er—believe Mr. Witherbee is

using his own launch this afternoon," Mr. Morton observed. "But—well, you know, we might be able to get—"

He paused in doubt. During an instant's silence their eyes met steadily.

"Yes, I think we might," said Rosalind. "Will you see if he's anywhere in sight?"

With a bow, Morton strode in the direction of the shore.

"I am rather curious to see those two persons together," murmured Rosalind, as she watched him go upon his errand.

It was nearly an hour before he put in an appearance.

"Awfully sorry to have kept you waiting," he said. "But I had to take a boat and row about a bit to find him. It's all right, however; he's at the wharf."

"That's very lovely of you," declared Rosalind graciously. "We might bring some of the others, too, if you like. Suppose you hunt them up. I'll go down to the boat."

She found the boatman wiping the seats and otherwise engaged in the discouraging task of trying to make his craft tidy. He greeted her with a brief nod.

"Fishing?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Muskies?"

"Why—yes."

"Well, that's good sport," he commented.

"You can take us to the proper place, of course?"

"Who—me?"

The boatman shook his head.

"Then why in the world do you pretend to hire out—"

Sam interrupted her.

"You don't want to go fishing," he said.

Rosalind's cheeks assumed a pink tint.

"Not for muskies, anyhow," added Sam.

In his eyes was a hint of amusement that angered her.

"It is my intention to go fishing,"

she declared coldly. "It is not my intention to have my word questioned."

He shrugged indifferently.

"Oh, very well, Miss Chalmers! How many in the party? Space is limited, you know."

"Myself — Mr. Morton — perhaps half a dozen others."

"Miss Dawson?" he asked.

Rosalind looked at him in quick astonishment.

"Because I can't take Miss Dawson," he added.

"You mean to say—"

"What I really meant to say was 'won't' instead of 'can't.' I won't take Miss Dawson."

For an instant Rosalind was quite too surprised for speech, a condition easily apparent to Sam, who volunteered further:

"No use to ask questions, Miss Chalmers. I'll give no reasons."

"This is the most unheard-of thing yet!" she exclaimed. "You mean to say that you presume to select my own guests for me?"

"No, ma'am; not exactly. But in this case— Here they come now. I guess it's all right; I don't see her."

Morton appeared on the wharf, followed by the Winter girls and Fortescue Jones.

"This will be all, I think," he said.

Rosalind did not meet the boatman's eye as the party embarked. She had a feeling that there would be an insulting gleam of satisfaction in it.

For fully half an hour after they left the wharf she was a silent member of the party, engrossed in wonderment over this new development. It seemed to possess no meaning whatever; at least, none that she could even speculate upon. He would not take Polly Dawson in his boat.

Sam sat stolidly in the stern, smoking and watching the river. Occasionally his glance wandered to Morton, yet incuriously. This passenger seemed to possess no more interest for him than the Winter girls or the

young man who toiled unskilfully over a jointed rod. As for Morton, the existence of the steersman did not appear to be within his ken.

Suddenly Rosalind remembered. She had come to study, not to fish. She had contrived a meeting so that she might observe a result. It was an experiment in human alchemy; put her Englishman and her boatman together and she felt that a reaction was inevitable. So now she began to observe.

Disappointment did not improve her temper. There was no reaction—no smoke, no fire, no explosion. They did not speak, neither did they exchange furtive glances. They were maddeningly at ease. Rosalind was soon disgusted with her experiment. She was quite willing to abandon it.

But the Jones young man was fishing by this time. Two strikes and two misses had rewarded his efforts, and he was wrought to a pitch of absorbed excitement. Rosalind felt she was doomed to a dull afternoon. It had now degenerated into a common fishing-party, even though there was but one fisherman, and it did not lie in her mouth to explain that it was never meant to be an angling affair at all.

She attempted to put her mind into a state of resignation, the most difficult mental feat she ever attempted, and one at which she usually met failure. Morton was dull when he talked at all. He was three per cent conversation and ninety-seven per cent silence. The Winter girls knitted as if it were a penance. There was momentary hope when Fortescue Jones broke the tip of his rod, but that took wings when he produced another.

Only the boatman truly enjoyed himself. Hatless, he reveled in the sun that bathed his head and bared neck. His pipe was drawing smoothly and steadily. But, most wonderful of all, his engine pulsed as rhythmically and surely as the power-plant of a six-thousand-dollar limousine. It was fairly uncanny in its perfection.

The launch ranged past the eastern tip of Grenadier Island, then across toward the Canadian shore, thence up-river, Fortescue Jones fishing desperately and bringing nothing within fifty feet of a gaff.

"We're going too fast," complained the fisherman.

Sam turned a glance of inquiry at Rosalind. She shook her head. The launch held its pace.

Another half-hour passed with scarce a word spoken aboard. Rosalind was bored to desperation. Her experiment in alchemy was the flattest kind of failure. She turned upon young Jones with sudden and undeserved severity.

"I should think it would be exceedingly tiresome to catch nothing," she said.

"It is," he assented hastily.

"Then why do you fish?"

"Why—why, I thought it was a fishing-party!"

"Without fish?"

"I've had half a dozen strikes."

She sighed and flashed a savage look at the boatman. He grinned.

"Shall we turn back?" she asked Morton, who was stroking his mustache in a preoccupied manner.

For answer he pointed toward a power-boat almost astern and following at a rapid rate.

"Seems, by Jove, as if they wished to speak with us," he said. "A chap just waved."

Rosalind studied the oncoming craft. It carried a small British ensign at the stern. Four men were standing in the cockpit, staring intently. As she watched one of them signaled.

"Stop the boat!" she commanded.

Sam obeyed, then turned for the first time to observe the pursuing vessel, now close aboard.

As the launch slackened to a slow drift the smart-looking power-boat with the British flag ranged alongside. A man who appeared to be in authority touched his cap formally.

"Who's the owner of this vessel?" he asked.

"Me," answered Sam without removing his pipe from his mouth.

"Name of vessel?" demanded the stranger briskly.

"Fifty-Fifty."

"What?"

"I said Fifty-Fifty."

"Registered?"

The boatman shrugged his shoulders.

"Let's see your license."

"Oh, this is an American boat," said the owner indifferently.

"Well, you're in Canadian waters. I'm a Canadian officer. I am entitled to inspect your papers. Let's see them."

"Didn't bring 'em."

The man turned and held a whispered conversation with two of his colleagues. One of them nodded.

"We'll probably have to take you ashore for that," he remarked very sternly.

Sam displayed no evidence of interest. He merely looked at Rosalind. That lady had been suddenly aroused from boredom. She was very much interested.

"I am responsible for the boat being here," she said. "I am hiring it. What is the trouble?"

"The trouble is, madam, that this man is navigating Canadian waters without being able to produce proper papers."

"But that does not seem like a very serious offense," remarked Rosalind. "I imagine it is being done every day."

"It's been done a number of times by this vessel, madam. We've watched it."

"Still, I do not see that it is a matter of much importance. I am sure no damage has been done."

"We're not so sure, madam."

A second man twitched the sleeve of the speaker, and they conferred in low tones.

"What is your name, madam?" de-

manded the spokesman, turning again to Rosalind.

She told him.

"And the names of the members of your party, please?"

She gave him those, while he made a careful memorandum of each.

"And this man?" with a nod at the boatman.

"Sam."

"Sam what?"

"Merely Sam, so far as I know."

He looked at the boatman for further enlightenment.

"Sam merely," echoed that person.

Again there was a whispered conference aboard the second craft.

"Do you know a man named Schmidt?" asked the one in authority, speaking to the boatman.

Sam indicated that he did.

"Heinrich Schmidt?"

"I believe that's his name. They fit together, anyhow."

"Who is he?"

"One of my best customers."

"Where's he from?"

"Chicago, so he told me. What's the game?"

"You took him to Rockport three days ago, didn't you?"

"That's right."

"And to Gananoque?"

"Right again."

"And he's been to Kingston twice with you?"

"Three times," corrected Sam.

"What was he doing at those places?"

"Doing? How do I know? I didn't follow him."

The four men in the strange boat withdrew to the farther end of their craft and put their heads together. Rosalind watched them impatiently. Even Morton displayed a mild interest, while the Winter girls stopped knitting and looked worried.

"Where does this man Schmidt stop?" demanded the spokesman when he emerged once more from the conference.

"Oh, he's been drifting around at

two or three places on the American side."

"Who does he meet?"

"Give it up," answered Sam. "I'm not in charge of him. I'm just his boatman."

"If you are looking for smugglers," interrupted Rosalind, "why—"

"We're not, madam," snapped the stranger.

He turned again to Sam.

"Did this man Schmidt ever discuss military subjects with you?"

"Yes, indeed. That is, once."

The men exchanged significant glances.

"When—and what?"

"The last time I had him out," said Sam. "He wanted to know if I didn't think Grant gave General Sigel a raw deal when he put somebody else on the job in the Shenandoah Valley."

The spokesman in the trim powerboat frowned heavily.

"That all?"

"All I remember. Except he said his father fought with Sigel and always claimed that Halleck framed him. I don't know whether he did or not, but I said I'd speak about it some time and see if I could find out. You wouldn't happen to know yourself, would you?"

The man glared suspiciously. Rosalind turned her face away and began dabbling one hand in the water, over the side of the boat.

"Well, I guess we'll take you up to Kingston," said the spokesman after a minute of deliberation. "There are a few things that need looking into."

Sam glanced about him casually.

"Not now you won't," he observed as he proceeded to refill his pipe. "We've crossed the line."

The man made a swift survey of the river and the islands and uttered an angry exclamation.

"You see, you talked too much," added the boatman deferentially. "You talked so long that we drifted over into American water. If you try to take me now they'll send a battle-

ship after me, or an ultimatum, or something else just as bad."

There was a hurried consultation among the four strangers, with evidences of disagreement. It ended when the man in command turned upon Sam with a stern visage.

"Hereafter," he said, "you enter Canadian waters or ports at your own risk. In the name of the English government I warn you. I also authorize you to extend the same warning to the man Heinrich Schmidt. If he is found north of the international boundary-line let him look out for himself. That applies to you, your boat, and any passengers you may have aboard."

Marjorie Winter turned pale.

"But really," she ventured timidly, "I'm very sure that none of us is against you, sir. See—these are for Belgians."

She held up a half-finished sock.

The man who sounded the warning did not look at it. He gave a sharp command and the boat with the British ensign snorted off across the river.

"I think we will go home now," observed Rosalind.

Without a word Sam started his engine.

It was a silent party that returned to Witherbee's Island. Rosalind was glad it was so. The affair was at once too big with possibilities and too nebulous as to facts for idle gossip.

To the best of her knowledge she had never seen a spy. She wondered if she were really looking at one now. He did not look like one.

Nor, for that matter, did Morton, who might well be expected to display interest at the very least if it were true that Sam and the Schmidt man were making voyages into Canadian ports that might end in nooses.

First a common thief, next a smuggler—now a spy! Rosalind found pleasurable excitement in her thoughts. Gertrude Witherbee was on the wharf when the launch came in. She was waving a yellow envelope at Rosalind.

"Telegram for you!" she called.

Rosalind took the message and read as follows:

Will arrive some time this evening.
WILLIAMS.

Reginald Williams, the persistent one, was coming! Rosalind gasped. Not that she minded Williams or his persistence. He was well enough in his way, and he could always be properly discouraged. She had no fears on that point.

But Reginald was the bracelet man! And the bracelet was now upon the smoothly tanned arm of Gertrude. And Reginald would see it—and recognize it. And he would wonder and ask questions and blurt something. There would be explanations and revelations and—

Rosalind shuddered, and pondered the matter deeply.

"It simply cannot be!" she exclaimed aloud.

"What can't be, dear?" asked Gertrude.

"Why—oh, nothing. I was just doing some oral thinking."

Gertrude smiled wisely. She knew about Reginald. And she knew—or thought she knew—that Reginald would ask again, and that, as Rosalind said, it simply could not be.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT REGGY DREW.

MRS. WITHERBEE, driven into a corner by an angry Rosalind, confessed that somewhere in the back of her mind there may have been a lurking purpose when she invited Reggy Williams to become a member of her summer household. Not being subtle in the least, Mrs. Witherbee interpreted the wrath of Rosalind at its face value. Hence, she sustained a shock within an incredibly short space of time.

"It was a most thoughtless thing," said Rosalind sternly.

"But, my dear, I didn't for a moment dream that his attentions would really—"

"Attentions? Bosh!"

Mrs. Witherbee opened her eyes wide.

"I'm not interested in his attentions—not in the slightest degree," said Rosalind. "They do not disturb me one way or the other. I am, however, purely from the standpoint of humanity, interested in the preservation of his life."

"His life!"

"Certainly. I thought you knew."

"But Rosalind, dear—"

"Why in the world you didn't ask me I don't know," said Rosalind, making a hopeless gesture with both arms. "Everybody else knows it."

Mrs. Witherbee's face had attained a greenish pallor.

"Knows what?" she asked tremblingly.

"Knows that Reginald Williams has a heart that is liable to drop him in his tracks any time."

Mrs. Witherbee raised both hands and opened her mouth.

"Certainly," added Rosalind sharply. "He's been suffering from it for some time. He's not allowed to take violent exercise, or to undergo any excitement or sudden shock. He has to be kept perfectly quiet. And above all he must not be given the slightest hint of his trouble. You see, he doesn't know it himself."

"Doesn't know it!"

"Indeed not. The physicians are afraid that it would make matters worse to tell him. So they told only his family, and his family has informed his friends. And Reggy is really in the hands of his friends without knowing it."

"But he'll be with friends here," said Mrs. Witherbee, brightening.

"Friends—yes!" exclaimed Rosalind. "But how about the excitement? Think of what's been going on here—of what may happen at any time. Why, it might kill him!"

Mrs. Witherbee sat down suddenly and limply.

"What shall we do?" she moaned.

"There is only one thing to do, of course; that is to make the best of it. He must be kept absolutely quiet, but he must not know that he is being kept quiet."

"Under no circumstances must he be told anything about burglars or smugglers or spies or anything of that sort. He must not know about the burglar-alarm, or the raids at this place and Mr. Davidson's—or anything! It may be a matter of life or death with him. Nobody must even suggest such a thing!"

"Why, Gertrude mustn't even wear that bracelet, because it's so odd it will start him asking questions, and then the whole thing is likely to come out!"

"Everybody must be told to say nothing whatever about anything that might give him a shock. Not only that; they mustn't even *do* anything exciting."

"I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry!" faltered Mrs. Witherbee as she rocked in her chair.

"It's too late to stop him, of course," continued Rosalind. "I suppose he's at Clayton by this time. So the only thing we can do is to take the utmost precautions. And we must be particularly careful that he does not even suspect!"

"Oh, we will; we will, my dear."

"And you'll tell everybody?" said Rosalind anxiously.

"Every soul! I'll tell Stephen immediately. We'll all help—we'll be so careful!"

Rosalind watched Mrs. Witherbee hurry in search of her husband and smiled grimly.

"Something had to be done about it," she murmured. "I couldn't think of anything else offhand."

It was dusk and the Witherbee household was sitting on the porch unnaturally quiet when a voice from the path that led to the wharf rent the air with a bellow.

"Ho there, somebody! Wonder you wouldn't welcome a guest!"

Simultaneously a tall, bulky figure appeared at the edge of the lawn and crossed at a rapid walk. It stopped at the foot of the steps. Two grips that were carried in one hand were tossed upon the porch with a flirt of the wrist. Then followed a trunk, which had been balanced jauntily on one shoulder. And then Reggy Williams cleared five steps in one leap and began shaking hands with everybody.

"Nice folks!" he shouted. "Not a soul to meet a fellow! Hello, Rosalind; you're looking fine and fit. Hello, Gertrude! Hello, Tom, you lazy mucker! Why didn't you give me a hand? Didn't know I'd be here so soon, eh? I've a good mind to carry you down to the river and chuck you in."

He charged about the porch like a nervous rhinoceros, bawling salutations and leaving in his wake an array of painfully throbbing fingers.

Reginald Williams stood six feet three. He was wide and thick and boisterous, and there was a deep red tan on his face that actually served to exaggerate his bulk.

Mrs. Witherbee, her hands clasped to her bosom, regarded him with horror.

"Won't you — please — take a chair?" she whispered timidly.

"Chair? Why, thanks—if you'll stick it in front of a table. I haven't had a mouthful since noon, and I don't mind saying I can eat anything and everything you've got in the house. Here, Tom! Don't fuss with that trunk; I'll take care of that later."

Mr. Witherbee cautiously pushed a porch rocker against Reginald's legs.

"We'll get you some grub," he said anxiously. "Only sit down first. Rest yourself, old man."

"Rest! That's all I've done all day in a train that didn't have ambition enough to keep within two hours of her schedule. I could have pushed the blamed thing faster than it went."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Witherbee, his brow furrowed in anxiety. "But just sit down a bit. Enjoy the air—it's great up here. See that view—isn't it amazing? Everything so quiet, so peaceful! Oh, it just puts ten years on a man's life to spend a little while up here! No worry, no cares, no excitement."

Reginald sat reluctantly.

"No excitement!" he exclaimed.

"Then, by George, we'll make some! How do you live without it? I can't. I'm going to start something, sure as you live. But I'd like to eat first."

The Witherbee family ventured inquiring glances at Rosalind. That lady's face bore a curious expression of doubt and dismay. But she did not lose her self-control. Stepping behind Reginald's chair, she raised a finger to her lips and shook her head warningly.

"I'll get you some toast directly," said Mrs. Witherbee. "And how do you like your tea?"

Reginald guffawed, then apologized.

"Excuse me; didn't mean to be rude. But if you've got any cold ham in the house, and some bread and butter, and a scuttle of hot coffee you needn't bother about the toast and tea. And you needn't fetch it out here; lead me to it."

The Winter girls exchanged apprehensive glances. Mr. Witherbee made a sign to his wife, who disappeared into the house. Rosalind followed her. The two ladies met in the pantry.

"I—I'm frightened to death," whispered Mrs. Witherbee. "Is he always that way?"

"Nearly always," sighed Rosalind. "That's what makes it so sad."

"I hadn't thought of it as being sad, my dear. It—it just seems sort of terrible. Doesn't he know?"

"Ssh! Of course not. He doesn't even suspect."

"The poor man!" said Mrs. Witherbee softly. "Then it is sad, isn't it? Isn't there any way to—control him?"

"It's very difficult," admitted Rosalind. "He's headstrong. And of

course, no knowing, you can't expect him to restrain himself. He's always been accustomed to leading an active life."

"Active, my dear! Why, he's violent. My knuckles are still aching. Do you really think we ought to let him have ham—and coffee?"

"We might as well," said Rosalind in a hopeless voice. "He'd probably make a scene over toast and tea."

"And he seems so healthy, poor fellow! And so strong!"

"He's deceptive," Rosalind observed hastily.

There was a heavy tramping of feet overhead, then a crash that rattled the dishes in the pantry. Mrs. Witherbee rushed into the hall, stifling a scream. Rosalind bit her lip.

When the mistress of the island returned her eyes were wide with terror.

"He—he carried his trunk upstairs!" she gasped. "He wouldn't let Stephen or Tom touch it."

"He does those things," said Rosalind unhappily. "He doesn't realize, you know. We can't restrain him by force, but we must do all we can."

"Does he have—attacks?"

"Oh, often. Terrible ones."

Mrs. Witherbee clasped her hands.

"And it's a two-mile sail to the nearest doctor!" she moaned.

"Never suggest a doctor to him," warned Rosalind. "He wouldn't understand and you can't tell what he might do. Don't think of such a thing!"

"But if anything should happen—"

"We must run the risk. We must make the best of it somehow. I'd cut more ham than that, I think; he'll only be out after more if you don't. I'll get the bread; no need to call the servants. I imagine we'd better bring it to him on the porch."

An awed household watched Reginald Williams eat. It was a rapid and extensive proceeding.

"Sorry to have put you out," he roared genially as he emptied the coffee-pot. "But a man has to have a

bite now and then to keep his body and soul in close relation."

"Of course," assented Mrs. Witherbee gently. "Good food, rest, and plenty of sleep."

"Oh, I'm not sleepy! I'm good for all night if there's anything doing."

"We live very quietly here, Mr. Williams."

"Oh, well, we'll manage to start something. Won't we, Tom?"

Tom Witherbee mumbled an unintelligible reply and glanced at Rosalind. She shook her head severely.

Suddenly Reginald missed the master of the house.

"Where's Mr. Witherbee?" he demanded.

"He—he went out in the launch," faltered Mrs. Witherbee.

"Why the dickens didn't he invite somebody? Nothing I'd like better on a night like this."

"He just went over to Mr. Davidson's island," explained Gertrude in a soothing tone. "He didn't think anybody would want to go."

At this point Fortescue Jones, who had been regarding Reginald with amazed eyes, entered the conversation. Said he:

"He went over to see about bur—"

The elbow of Tom Witherbee put an abrupt end to the sentence.

"To see about what?" demanded Reginald.

Mrs. Witherbee rolled her eyes helplessly. Her husband had gone to the burglar meeting.

"To see about burlap," said Rosalind hastily.

"Burlap?"

"Certainly — burlap. He wants it to wrap things in."

"Must want it pretty badly," commented Reginald, "if he has to make a special voyage to get it. Oh, well, if we can't go sailing let's start something. Let's dance!"

Rosalind leaned weakly against a pillar of the porch.

"We—we don't dance," said Gertrude.

"Don't dance!"

The eyes of Reginald Williams successively met those of the two Winter girls, Polly Dawson, Gertrude, and Rosalind.

"You haven't all sprained your ankles, have you?" he asked.

"I mean we haven't been doing any dancing here," explained Gertrude desperately. "We— Mother doesn't like it."

This statement astonished Mrs. Witherbee to such an extent that she opened her mouth and held it that way for several seconds. Then she nodded.

The next half-hour on the Witherbee porch was crowded with the efforts of ten persons to curb the restless spirit of a young man who wanted to do something.

They spoke softly and upon soft topics, such as gardening and clothes and fresh air. They argued nothing, but agreed upon everything. They urged Reginald to sit down. They tried to make him wear Mr. Witherbee's top coat. They watched with sickening dread as he smoked. They scarcely breathed when he proposed to take a moonlight swim.

Then one by one they went off to bed, yawning prodigiously and declaring that it was getting very late. Reginald and Rosalind found themselves alone.

He waited to make sure that the last of the company had disappeared, then turned to her with a bewildered look.

"What on earth is the matter with this crowd?" he demanded.

"What seems to be the matter?" asked Rosalind.

"Matter! They all act as if they were afraid to make a noise or turn around. They even whisper. Nothing's gone wrong here, has it?"

"No, indeed!" hastily.

"Well, it's about as cheerful as a shipwreck. Has it been going on like this very long? I don't see how you and the rest of the younger folk stand it."

"It's rather pleasant to be quiet for a change, Reggie."

"Quiet! I don't call that being quiet—it's sepulchral. I came up here to have a good time. I'm going to shake this crowd up to-morrow."

"You mustn't!"

Rosalind's voice was anxious. Something more would have to be done, she was certain. Reginald was capable of executing his threat.

"I'll tell you," she said in a low tone. "But you must not mention the fact to any person that I did tell you. It's on account of Mr. Morton."

"The Englishman? What's the matter with him?"

Rosalind hesitated. What was the matter with Mr. Morton? She felt that she was rapidly becoming mired.

"Well, you see, Mr. Morton is just recovering from a breakdown," she ventured.

"What kind of a breakdown?"

"Mental."

"Loose in the bean, eh?"

"Reginald! You know I hate slang. No; he's not—that. Not nearly so bad. But he had a breakdown—mostly nervous, I think. It came from overwork, I believe. He must have absolute quiet—no excitement, nothing to irritate him.

"But you must not mention it to a soul, Reggie; and particularly you must not let him see that you notice anything peculiar. He's very sensitive."

Reginald grumbled.

"So that's why we all have to keep very quiet," said Rosalind with finality.

"He ought to be shipped off to a nut college," declared Reginald. "Anybody like that is liable to break loose at any time. I didn't come up here to be a keeper."

"Well, you are not compelled to remain."

Rosalind's voice was cool.

"Oh, but I am! You know very well I couldn't stay away. Why, I practically invited myself."

He tried to capture one of Rosalind's hands, but she, alert, easily evaded his clumsy caress.

"Please don't begin that again," she said in annoyance. "If you do I'll go home to-morrow."

"But, Rosalind, you know very well—"

"Will you stop?"

"Oh, very well! But I give you fair warning that I haven't stopped for good."

She sighed and frowned.

"I thought I'd struck the limit of unsociability on the way down here," observed Reginald. "The fellow that brought me was deaf and dumb."

"Really?"

"Couldn't speak a word. Couldn't hear, either. I had to write on a piece of paper where I wanted to go."

"A boatman, was he?"

"Yes. And the worst of it was, his boat broke down a couple of times on the way, and he didn't seem to know much about fixing it. I couldn't help him, and he didn't even have the satisfaction of being able to swear."

Rosalind found herself listening with breathless attention.

"What sort of a boat was it?" she asked.

"Not much to look at. Rather dirty, too."

She had more than a suspicion.

"What did the man look like?" carelessly.

"A chap with a beard. Long, thin person. Why?"

"Oh, nothing! I think I've seen him around. You say he is a deaf-mute?"

"Absolutely. I met him on the wharf up at Clayton, and when I asked him a question about the boats he made signs at me. Then I felt sort of sorry for him, and thought I'd give him a job."

Rosalind's brain was in a whirl. Sam, the boatman, playing deaf-mute! She could not even begin to guess a reason.

"He knew where the place was, all

right; I'll say that for him," added Reginald. "But it's not particularly entertaining to be cooped up with a dummy in a bum boat for a couple of hours."

"I should imagine not," she murmured.

"But I did the swearing for him, anyhow. And—funny about that, too—he must have understood what I was doing, for he grinned from ear to ear and nodded his head. It must be tough not to be able to do your own cussing."

"I don't suppose it does afford much relief to do it with your fingers," Rosalind agreed. "That is," she supplemented righteously, "if it ever does give one any relief. It's a miserable habit."

"It's not a habit," said Reginald. "It's a vocation, if you do it right. Who's this coming?"

Heavy, deliberate footfalls announced the return of Mr. Witherbee from the meeting of the vigilantes.

"Get your burlap?" inquired Reginald pleasantly.

"Burlap?" echoed Mr. Witherbee. Rosalind interposed hastily.

"You must have forgotten your errand," she said, laughing. "You know perfectly well you started out to get some burlap."

"Burlap?"

Mr. Witherbee repeated the word with a rising inflection.

Rosalind had slipped behind Reginald and was making a frantic pantomime. The master of the island stared at her for a few seconds, wrinkling his forehead.

"Why, certainly," she said. "Don't you remember saying you were going to see if Mr. Davidson had some?"

"Oh, yes," answered Mr. Witherbee slowly. "Come to think of it, I did start out to get some. And just as you say, I forgot all about it. By the way, sit down, Williams. Take it easy. You must be tired after a long day's journey."

"Everybody seems to think I'm

tired," sighed Reginald. "I guess in order not to disappoint them I'd better go to bed. Good night."

He stamped noisily inside and up the staircase.

"Is—is he all right?" asked Mr. Witherbee in a hoarse whisper.

"Oh, perfectly. We've kept him just as quiet as possible."

"That's right; that's right. Poor chap. And he's so healthy to look at, too! By the way, what's this burlap game?"

Rosalind laughed.

"It's all on account of that stupid Jones boy," she explained. "He started to blurt something about why you had gone to Mr. Davidson's, and he had half of 'burglar' out when Tom bumped him with his elbow. Then I had to finish it somehow, and all I could think of was burlap. You see, it had to be something that couldn't possibly excite Reggy."

"I get you," grinned Mr. Witherbee. "Burlap, eh? I'll have to remember to get some now."

Suddenly his expression changed and he became grave.

"We've organized," he said in guarded tones. "There were seven islands represented. We're going to hire a patrol. Some of them are going to get watchmen, too. And it's high time, Rosalind."

He stepped closer and looked about him cautiously.

"Somebody's been on the island again," he whispered. "But don't say anything yet!"

"Again!"

"To-night, I think. Somebody's stolen the dog!"

"You are sure?"

"Positive. I tied the beast up near the dock when I went out in the boat. And he's gone!"

Rosalind could only blink at this intelligence.

"But I don't want to worry Mrs. Witherbee about it," added that lady's husband. "And of course we've got to keep it from Williams. So don't

say anything. Good night. Grand watch-dog, that; I guess he needed stealing."

CHAPTER XI.

TREED!

IT was early afternoon when Sam nursed the Fifty-Fifty into the rock-bound cove that formed his island harbor, made her fast, and stepped ashore. He advanced up the winding path to his cabin. Midway in its length he paused and listened.

A dog barked.

The boatman resumed his advance at a quicker pace. He caught sight of the cabin, then of an agitated red setter that ran to and fro beneath a tree whose branches brushed the roof of the dwelling. The animal was yelping nervously.

Next the boatman saw a pair of feet, shod in snowy white and outlined sharp and clear against the dark-green foliage. The feet were attached to a pair of ankles, also in white—ankles that were slim, aristocratic, even haughty.

Then as he stepped forward the rim of a white skirt came into view. A second later his advance brought him to a point from which he obtained a full view of Rosalind Chalmers, sitting on the branch of a tree.

"Call off your dog!" she commanded.

Sam removed his gaze from the vision in the tree and studied the animal thoughtfully. The setter, having sighted the boatman, ceased baying and sat down with an alert eye upon the quarry.

"The dog, I said!" said Rosalind harshly. "Call him off!"

Sam's glance returned to the lady on the branch.

"Good afternoon," he said pleasantly.

Rosalind returned the inspection through angry eyes.

"Are you going to call off the dog?" she demanded.

"Why, I was just thinking about it," drawled Sam. "I don't know that I ought to discourage him."

The lady in the tree uttered an exclamation.

"You see," added the boatman, "the dog is only doing his duty. His job is to protect my property. He looks out for it when I'm away."

She observed that the boatman was staring intently, not at her eyes—where it is customary to look at a person—but at her ankles, where it is not always polite to stare. She knew they were conspicuous, but she also realized the futility of flinching. Sitting on a limb, there was absolutely no way to make her skirt cover them.

"This—this is an outrage!" she stormed.

"Why, perhaps—ma'am. But whose fault?"

"The beast—he—he chased me!"

"I told him to."

"You told him to?"

"That is, I told him to chase anybody. I hardly expected he'd tree you. Did I, old sport?"

The dog relaxed his vigil long enough to turn his head, wag his tail furiously, and give throat to a joyous bark.

"You see, this is where I live," added Sam with a nod at the cabin. "He's in charge when I'm not here."

"In charge since—"

"Yesterday."

"You stole him!"

The boatman seemed indifferent to the charge.

"That dog belongs to Mr. Witherbee," declared Rosalind. "You know perfectly well you stole him. And—will you call him off?"

"Perhaps—by and by," answered the boatman.

He seated himself on the ground ten feet below her and began fumbling for tobacco. Rosalind was pink with rage.

"I'm coming down!" she declared.

Sam did not appear to hear the announcement.

She slid cautiously along the limb

for a few inches, steadying herself by a tight grip on another branch. The dog sprang to his feet and yelped furiously. Rosalind became rigid again.

"Will you call him off?"

Sam studied her ankles, then resumed the methodical filling of his pipe.

"What brought you here?" he asked after a pause.

"I came in a rowboat."

"Alone?"

"Certainly."

"I didn't see the boat."

"It drifted away—I wouldn't be here except for that."

"What did you come for?"

Rosalind gritted her teeth and wondered if the dog would really bite.

"I was merely rowing," she said, trying to calm her voice. "I—I thought the island was unoccupied."

"You didn't happen to be looking for a smugglers' cave, did you?"

"No!"

"Or a burglars' den?"

"No!"

"Or an international spy?"

She remained furious and silent.

"It's rather important for me to know," he explained as he scratched a match. "There's so much hunting going on that it isn't safe to ignore it. You don't happen to be a member of a posse, do you?"

"Will you let me down?"

"That's his affair," answered the boatman, nodding in the direction of the dog. "He seems to like you where you are. I don't know that I ought to interfere. It might discourage him and make him careless in the future. Did you visit my cabin?"

Rosalind remained silent.

The boatman whispered something to the dog, then arose lazily and walked over to the shack. Rosalind saw him disappear within the door. She made a second tentative move toward descent. The dog, which lay watching her with his nose between his paws, sprang up and snarled.

A moment afterward Sam emerged

from the cabin, staring ruefully at a sheet of paper that was in his hand.

"You tore down my picture-gallery," he said reproachfully. "Why did you do that?"

Rosalind flushed and compressed her lips.

"I thought quite a lot of that picture," he mused, seating himself again. "It seemed like such a good likeness."

"You beast!"

"That's not the way to make friends with him," cautioned the boatman.

"I mean you!"

"Oh! Well, that's not the way to make friends with me, either. Didn't you like my portrait of a lady?"

"I'm coming down!" she warned desperately.

"I wouldn't—yet. He can really bite, ma'am. Have you been there long?"

"An hour."

"Is it comfortable up there?"

She remained grimly silent. It was *not* comfortable. The limb was very hard and its diameter was meager. Her feet were asleep.

The boatman returned to a study of the "portrait." He even began to read aloud from it, when Rosalind stopped him with an imploring exclamation.

"Please—please!" she cried.

"But it's such a good portrait," he protested, looking up at her mildly. "It's a new kind of art. It's got the cubists beaten a mile. Statist, I suppose you'd call it. It gives all the dope—just draws a picture in facts and figures. I'm strong for it."

"Listen. Here's where it says you—"

"Stop!"

"You are the daughter of—"

"Oh, *will* you stop?"

He paused in his reading and observed her attentively. What he saw appeared to please him. Rosalind was never more charming. She was a goddess, all in white save for the fiery tint in her cheeks and the dangerous glint in her blue eyes.

"Say," he said with sudden inter-

est, "how'd you get up there, anyhow? It's some climb."

"I—I had to climb."

"Meaning he pushed you pretty hard," nodding at the dog.

"Of course!"

"I'd have given a lot to have seen you make it," he mused. "If I call him off will you do it again?"

She flushed hotly and shot him a look of stinging contempt. He never winced.

"You see," he explained, "there's no branch below the one you're sitting on. And that's a good ten feet up. You must have jumped for it and swung yourself up, or else you shinned the tree. In either case it was a stunt that's a credit to you. I'm certainly sorry I missed it—ma'am."

He drawled the last word with maddening emphasis.

Rosalind was in despair. It was not fear of the dog—now. She knew that Sam would not dare to let the animal attack, even if she descended from her refuge. It was fear of the boatman's mocking eyes. He was smiling. What would he do when she, Rosalind the dignified, began the scramble that must precede her arrival at *terra firma*?

Dignity scarcely sat with her on the limb, even now; it would be a thousand miles away when she made the first decisive move. It was a sense of dignity wholly that restrained Rosalind. She did not care particularly about her ankles; she was not ashamed of them and had no reason to be. But she was bitterly resolved that she would cling to the very end to whatever shred of haughty poise remained to her.

Temper loosed her tongue again.

"Thief! Smuggler!" she exclaimed. "They'll make short work of you when I'm free from this."

"Well, we're all little pals together," he observed serenely.

"Spy!"

"Say, that was a funny one, wasn't it?" he said, brightening. "Me *und* Schmidt—spies! That was one you never even thought of, ma'am."

"Will you stop calling me 'ma'am'?"

"Excuse me. I was only trying to be respectful. What do you want me to call you—Rosie?"

Rosalind almost lost her balance. She recovered herself with a desperate grab at a branch and made a choking noise in her throat. It shamed her to know that tears were in her eyes, but she could not force them back.

"About that spy business," he went on. "Did you believe that?"

"I see no reason to doubt it."

He mused over that for a while.

"It's hanging if it's true," he remarked presently.

"I hope so!"

"Hanging for me *und* Schmidt. I hate to think about it."

Rosalind could contemplate it with pleasure.

"Poor old Schmidt! Fat old Schmidt—who never did anything worse than buy and sell wheat on the Chicago Board of Trade! Think of hanging Schmidt as a spy!"

Rosalind paid little attention to the uttered thoughts of the boatman. She was trying to concentrate on her own case. Thus far conversation had been futile while the dog and the man remained inexorable.

She blamed herself bitterly for the panic that had driven her to an arboreal refuge. If only she had stopped and faced the beast all might have been saved! As she looked down upon him now she did not believe he would bite. But he had come upon her so suddenly, so clamorously, that self-possession fled from her in a flash.

And now, even though she lacked faith in his ferocity and remembered how insinuatingly he had nosed his muzzle into her hand back on the Witherbee place, there were other reasons. Chief of course was the sardonic boatman.

Yet she was frantically anxious to descend from her tree. To gain that she was almost willing to sacrifice everything save dignity. She was even

content to sue for peace—to make terms, if need be to humiliate herself before this common creature who calmly smoked and watched her discomfort.

"May I come down now?" she asked so sweetly that the alteration in her voice startled him.

He stared at her and whistled.

"Please!"

Rosalind's tone was liquid in its smoothness. And—she smiled! The boatman dropped his pipe.

"Do it again," he said incredulously.

"What?"

"Smile!"

She did it again, this time with less obvious effort. His complete astonishment helped to lighten the task.

"Great Heavens, you *can* do it!"

"And now may I come down?"

She suited a movement to the question, but the dog growled again. The boatman recovered his composure.

"Well, I don't know about that," he said. "It depends. You see, you've invaded my island and you've been prospecting around my cabin, and maybe you're fixing to get me into trouble."

"I promise!" she exclaimed hastily.

"But you've got me for a thief, a smuggler, and a spy, and that's a whole lot to have on anybody."

"I'm willing to ignore the matter, then. It's none of my business."

"Hum! That sounds fair enough, of course. But how can I tell they won't wheedle it out of you?"

"Do you think I'm a child?"

"I should say not!"

She did not relish the emphasis nor see the need for it.

"Well, am I to be released?" she asked after a pause.

"I'm thinking about it. Why did you tear down my picture-gallery?"

"It was an insult!"

"Not a bit, ma'am. It was just a portrait—a bully one. Anyhow, why shouldn't I have one? Thousands of 'em have been printed."

Rosalind bit her lip.

"They're in common circulation, all over. Anybody with three dollars can buy one."

"You stole it."

"That's a compliment to you, ma'am. See the risk I ran—for a picture."

"They—they are not for common people," she said frigidly.

Sam surveyed her leisurely.

"I suppose that means me," he remarked.

She answered with a gesture.

"And of course you're something better than common clay," he mused.

She did not stoop to answer him.

"Say!" he broke out suddenly. "Far be it from me to be impolite to a lady, particularly a lady with her portrait written in a three-dollar society book. But do you know that you make me good and tired?"

The lady in the tree gasped.

"Yes; dead weary. I've heard about you. I read the papers sometimes. You're one of the exclusive bunch; you're in the 'it' class. Everybody outside of it is plain common dirt—to you. You've got the coin and the pedigree, which is supposed to make you something extra special. You're supposed to be a shade higher up than human. They tell me you're a heart-breaker, too."

Rosalind turned white.

"Just why you should be such a heart-breaker," he continued, examining her with a critical eye, "is something I don't quite get. You're a good enough looker, so far as that goes, but—shucks! There are lots of those. Never saw a man yet that was fit to marry you, I understand. A sort of a man-hater, maybe.

"Yet you never try to head a man off if you see he's in a fair way to get his heart cracked. That's your favorite sport, according to the dope I get. You just take it as something that is naturally coming to you. If it didn't happen you'd feel insulted. Oh, yes! I've heard about you."

She was rigid as marble and almost as breathless.

"Let me tell you something—Rosie. You can't put that stuff over on me. You can swing it across on some society guy, but it doesn't go here. Why, I can tell things about your doings in the last forty-eight hours that 'll knock you clean out of the Blue Book."

"As I said before, I don't want to be rude to a lady, ma'am, and I don't intend to say anything that would hurt her feelings—not for anything. But you make me plain and plumb tired."

Rosalind was crying in sheer helpless rage. The boatman watched the tears stonily. After a short pause he arose from his seat on the ground and whistled to the dog.

"You can come down if you like," he informed her.

Torn with a storm of sobs and mortification, Rosalind made no move to descend. He watched her for a minute, then went into the cabin and returned, dragging the table. This he placed beneath the limb where she still clung, quivering.

Mounting the table, he reached up and in a most impersonal way grasped her about the waist and swung her clear of the tree. For an instant Rosalind found herself poised in the air. Then she was deposited on the ground. She walked a few steps and leaned weakly against the tree. The dog barked in delight.

"Well, you've got to get home, I suppose," said Sam. "And your boat's gone. It's up to me to take you. I don't mind earning a little money."

"You may as well quit crying, too. You're not hurt and you're not down-hearted. You're just good and mad; that's all."

He turned to lead the way down the path, then stopped and stared through an opening in the trees.

"Another visitor," he observed with a grin.

Rosalind followed the direction of his glance. Reginald Williams in a motor-launch was just making the

shore of the island. He glimpsed her white-clad figure and waved his hand.

"Oh!" she gasped.

"Trouble?" inquired Sam.

"You mustn't tell him! How shall I explain? What shall I do? I can't ever, ever—"

Her tears began to flow afresh.

"Needn't worry about me telling him anything, ma'am. I'm deaf and dumb—to him."

"But—but—"

Rosalind Chalmers was deserted by her cloak of calm disdain. She was in a panic.

A sudden change came over the boatman.

"Come on, buck up!" he said, cheerfully. "I'm sorry I made you cry. I take it all back—honest. Just forget it. We'll get out of this easy. Get your nerve now—quick! He'll be here in a couple of minutes. Be a sport, Miss Chalmers! Be a pal; just make believe you're the master mechanic again. Think hard now. We've got to hand him something."

"But he'll think that I—"

"No, he won't," declared Sam soothingly. "He won't have time to think anything. That's it; brace hard, now. I knew you were game."

He actually patted her on the shoulder. Somehow Rosalind neglected to resent the vulgar familiarity.

"Here! I've got the scheme!" he exclaimed. "Only *you'll* have to spiel it at him because I'm a dummy. Now, listen!"

CHAPTER XII.

TURNING THE TABLES.

SAM talked rapidly and with many gestures, the latter for the benefit of Reggy Williams in case Reggy might be looking up from the landing-place, where he was now making fast his boat.

"You went out rowing," explained Sam hurriedly. "You rowed up close to my island."

"But why did I go rowing? I've got to know that. I told Mr. Williams I was going up-stairs to take a nap."

"Oh, you changed your mind about napping, or you went rowing in your sleep. Anything will do; what's the difference about why you went? The point is, you went rowing. You're old enough. While you were close to my island you were upset in a sudden squall."

"There hasn't been a breath of wind to-day!"

"Well, cut out the squall, then. You rocked the boat, or did something silly, and fell overboard. You screamed and I—"

"You're deaf and dumb? How could you hear me scream?"

"That's right. Cut out the scream. I saw you; that'll do. I'm not supposed to be blind. I rushed down, got into my boat, went out and rescued you. Then I brought you to the island to recover. How's that?"

Rosalind looked doubtful.

"He'll be here in a minute," warned Sam. "Either take that or invent a better one."

"But it makes me sound so foolish—so helpless!" she protested. "And he knows I can swim."

"Tell him you forgot how—your skirts tangled you up—anything!"

Rosalind nodded her head reluctantly.

"All—right."

Reggy Williams was now hidden from view at a bend in the path, which he was already ascending. Rosalind gasped abruptly.

"My clothes!" she exclaimed. "I fell overboard and—and I'm not even wet!"

"Ouch!" cried the boatman. "I forgot. But wait!"

He dashed into the cabin, then reappeared carrying a large galvanized-iron pail. It seemed to be heavy.

A second later and the contents of it—cold, pure water from the great St. Lawrence—descended upon Rosalind like a cloud-burst.

"Now you're O. K. for the part," grinned the boatman as he tossed the pail aside.

"You—you—"

"S-sh! It's a grand make-up. Had to be done, you know."

Rosalind, a beautiful, dripping statue of white, shot him a glance of fury and hate. Her drenched costume clung clammy. Wet strands of hair plastered her cheeks, while her eyes blinked painfully from the effects of the deluge.

"Here he is," whispered the boatman as Williams entered the scene. "Remember—I'm a dummy! Talk up now like a rescued lady."

Reginald Williams, momentarily halted by the spectacle of a moist and miserable lady, sprang forward with an anxious cry.

"Rosalind!"

She waved him back and made a wild effort to smooth her hair.

"You're hurt!" cried Reginald. "What's happened?"

"I'm—I'm not hurt," she answered. "Don't be silly. I'm merely wet."

"Wet! You're saturated, child!" "I'm not a child. Please don't get hysterical, Reggy."

"But how—why—"

"Naturally I've got to explain," she sighed.

The boatman, standing behind Reginald, winked enthusiastically and waved his hand.

"You see, I didn't take a nap," said Rosalind. "I changed my mind about that. I went out for a row. Why didn't I tell you? Why should I, Reggy?"

"But you nearly drowned yourself!" blurted Reginald in a dismayed tone.

"On the contrary I did nothing of the kind. This—this fellow here is the cause of everything."

Reginald whirled swiftly upon the boatman, who stood open-mouthed, staring at Rosalind.

"What have you done?" roared Reginald, his great figure advancing threateningly.

With a swift look of pained surprise at the dripping one, Sam made a gesture of incomprehension and backed away a step.

"He is deaf and dumb, remember," interposed Rosalind. "Don't hurt him, Reggy. Of course he didn't do it intentionally. But he is such a clumsy fool!"

The boatman's mouth was still open. He seemed to be holding his breath.

"I don't care if he is deaf and dumb," declared Reginald savagely. "If he's done anything to you, I'll break his neck. Tell me, Rosalind—hurry!"

She smiled very faintly, and bestowed a sweeping and deliberate look of malice upon Sam. As Reginald removed his glance from the object of his threat the boatman shook a fist at Rosalind and went through a frantic pantomime. It had no effect upon her.

"Why, you see, Reggy, as I said before, I went rowing. After a while I came to this island. I was tired of rowing and I came ashore for a rest."

Sam was glaring and shaking his head. He even pointed at the tree, then at the dog. Reginald, who caught the gesture, was puzzled.

"What's the matter with him?" he demanded.

"Don't pay any attention to him," advised Rosalind. "He's a little unbalanced, I think."

"I'll tie him up if you say."

"No, indeed; he's quite harmless."

The boatman, making sure again that Reginald was not looking, shook his fist and pointed to the pail that had so recently played its part. Rosalind ignored the implied exposure.

"Where was I?" she mused. "Oh, yes; I came ashore. While I was sitting on the rocks, resting, I saw this man approaching in his launch. He had the engine stopped and was leaning over the side of the boat, which was drifting along slowly. He seemed to be engaged with something that was in the water. It—it was a fish-net, I think."

"Against the law," observed Reginald, nodding.

"Of course. And then, while I watched him he fell overboard."

Sam, who had been listening with steadily widening eyes, broke into a furious pantomime. He shook his head violently and pointed at his clothing. Rosalind bit her lip and remembered. The boatman's clothes were dry.

For an instant she paused, dismayed. The web of her fiction was becoming tangled. From sheer stubbornness, hardened with a desire for revenge, she had embarked upon a tale of her own. If there was lying to be done Rosalind was resolved to be the architect of her own falsehoods. She would *not* become a parrot for the lies of another.

Nor had she a mind to play the weak and conventional part of a maiden in distress, rescued by masculine courage and brawn. Even though wet and undignified she proposed to preserve some shred of superiority to the sex that scattered hearts at her feet.

"As I said," she resumed suddenly with a swift flash of her eyes in the direction of Sam, "the creature fell overboard. He began floundering about in the water quite helplessly, and it was evident he could scarcely swim a stroke. I couldn't see him drown, so I had to go to the rescue."

"And you rowed out—"

"That was the trouble," continued Rosalind. "My boat had drifted loose and had disappeared. So there was nothing else to do but swim—unless I wanted to see him drown."

"Rosalind!"

Reginald's eyes were blazing with admiration.

"Oh, it wasn't much of a swim," she said carelessly. "Not over a hundred yards, I should say."

"But you risked your life, child!"

"Not at all. I can really swim, Reggy; you know that. Well, I got to him after a while, at any rate, and I found him in such a panic of fear that

it was difficult to do anything for him."

She paused long enough to allow her glance to wander again toward the boatman. His symptoms were those of hysteria.

"Finally I managed to get him by the collar from behind," continued Rosalind calmly. "I had to choke him a little, I think. It wasn't very easy to get him to the launch, which had begun to drift, but we made it after a while. Then—"

Another inspection of Sam seemed to afford her satisfaction, for she smiled.

"Then it was a question of getting him aboard. He was in a complete funk; did nothing but cling to the boat and roll his eyes. I had to climb in myself and then drag him after me. And then—think of it, Reggy—he began to weep. That great, grown man shed tears like a child!"

Reginald surveyed the great, grown man with pity and contempt.

"That's all of it," added Rosalind. "It was just a question of running the boat to the island."

The suitor from the city gazed upon Rosalind Chalmers in adoration.

"You wonder!" he exclaimed.

She made a careless gesture and turned a pair of triumphant eyes in the direction of the boatman. He had ceased his pantomime and was regarding her with an expression even more rapt than that of Reginald.

"Wait till they hear of this at the Witherbees!" exclaimed Reginald.

"They mustn't!" she said hastily.

"Not for anything!"

"But my dear girl, it's so—"

"Remember Mr. Morton!"

Reginald frowned. The boatman's manner became suddenly alert. The name of Morton had a galvanizing effect. Then he remembered his rôle and relapsed into vacant passivity.

"Hang Morton!" blurted Reginald.

"If the man's insane, as you say he is, I don't see why he isn't sent away. He's got everybody walking around on

tiptoe and whispering. They've got the habit so bad that they even do it to me."

Sam's brow was furrowed, and the look he devoted to Rosalind contained a perplexed inquiry. She did not meet his eyes for long.

"At any rate I don't care to have you mention the matter," she said firmly. "It's nothing."

"Well, I think when a girl does a fine, brave thing like that she's entitled to all the credit for it," Reginald grumbled. "And to think of it being wasted on that boob, too!"

Once more he inspected the boatman. Then, as he studied the loose-jointed figure, surprise came into Reginald's eyes. He looked back to Rosalind.

"That's funny."

"What?"

"Why, his clothes are dry!"

The boatman was having a convulsion of some kind. His body twitched violently and bent almost double.

"Oh, yes," said Rosalind. "You see, he was chattering so with cold or fright, probably both, that I told him he'd better put on some dry clothes. He had some in the cabin."

Sam managed to straighten himself.

"You told him?" repeated Reginald wonderingly.

"Yes; he seems to have no initiative whatever."

"You don't mean to say he heard you?"

Again the boatman had a seizure.

"Of course not," answered Rosalind easily. "I had to write it on a piece of paper."

Sam turned abruptly and walked to the cabin. His shoulders were shaking.

"He isn't over it yet," commented Reginald.

"I don't imagine he will be over it for a good while," said Rosalind a little savagely. "I think you may take me home now, Reggy."

The boatman stood in the doorway of his cabin, watching them descend the path. He was grinning broadly.

Rosalind felt that she had in some measure achieved revenge for the indignity of her bath. It was no more of a falsehood than the story Sam had attempted to put into her mouth; certainly it was better to be a heroine than a clinging creature.

And by all odds it was an improvement on the preposterous and humiliating truth!

She and Reginald heard a clatter of footsteps behind them as they stepped into the Witherbee launch and turned to see the boatman running down the path. He was making gestures that were clearly intended to delay their departure, so they waited.

As he reached the rock from which they embarked he dropped to his knees, stretched his arms wide and looked up at Rosalind with eyes that conveyed to her an expression of doglike devotion. If there was a hint of something else in them, it was not Sam's fault. As an actor he was but an amateur.

Before the lady in the wet gown could divine his purpose he seized her hands in his own, bent his head over them and began kissing them. Rosalind uttered a cry of disgust. His beard tickled! Also she detested sentimentality.

"The poor fellow is trying to tell you how grateful he is," said Reginald.

Rosalind struggled to release her hands, but the boatman clung to them.

"Reggy! Make him let go!" she called sharply.

Reginald laid a rough hand on the boatman's shoulder and shook him. The man lifted his head and stared reproachfully. Then he dropped Rosalind's hands and sighed deeply.

She found as she drew back with a little shudder of annoyance that in the palm of one hand there was a folded bit of paper. Instinctively, her fingers closed over it; there was no need of explaining more things to Reginald.

Not until some time later, when the launch was far on the way to Witherbee's Island, did Rosalind find an opportunity to examine it. Then, her

back turned to Reginald, she unfolded the crumpled sheet, and read:

PAL ROSIE:

You put one over on me that time—but just wait.

CHAPTER XIII.

RINGING IN.

WHY the fat Mr. Schmidt from Chicago wanted to go to a dance was a problem that Sam made no serious effort to solve, for in a modern day when neither fat nor age nor bodily infirmity check the universal human impulse it was of little avail to seek the motive in a given case. You simply go and dance—or think you do—and that's an end of it, with no questions asked.

The dancing-desires of the fat grain-broker from Chicago had taken him from the American mainland to Wellesley Island, a passage safely accomplished aboard the Fifty-Fifty. And when Schmidt had been set ashore at the wharf-entrance to a hotel-property that blazed with light Sam backed a little way into the river and made fast to a handy mooring.

Boats by the dozen churning in from all directions passed close to the dingy launch. They were freighted with people, much dressed and wholly abandoned to laughter and chatter.

The boatman watched the procession with close attention. It had a cheering effect upon his loneliness.

"No sense to it—but why should there be?" he reflected. "If it's not dancing it's something else just as crazy. I don't blame 'em. I say, go to it; yes, even Schmidt."

"Doll up and walk like a duck while the band plays. It's easy and foolish, and if you do it wrong everybody tries to imitate the new step. Far be it from me to complain. On with the dance!"

Besides, Schmidt paid in cash and paid well—and Sam was not a boatman for his health.

A sharp, incisive voice, clear as a bell across the water, reached his quick ears. He turned in the direction of the sound. Out of the gloom came the shape of a large, white launch, passing close, and inbound for the festivities.

"Of course," said the voice in a tone of bored protest, "it will not be necessary to meet—persons in general."

"Not unless you wish to," the voice was answered by another. "We have our own crowd."

"That's something, of course. I hope we shall be able to keep together; I hate a mixture."

Sam smiled and wrinkled his nose.

"Same old master mechanic," he murmured. "Royalty going to watch the peasants frolic."

He watched the Witherbee yacht make the landing, and saw, by the glow of the colored lanterns that bespangled the wharf, a tall, slender figure in white that was not unfamiliar. An instant later it was lost in the crowd.

From the shore came the sounds of a band. The lips of the boatman pursed; he whistled softly. Presently his feet were tapping on the floor of the cockpit. His shoulders swayed rhythmically to the beat of the music.

"And Reggy—she calls him Reggy—is there," he murmured as the tune faded away. "And the English gink, too. And the child with the fishing-rod. And they'll all be dancing with the master mechanic. Huh! Maybe even Schmidt will horn in, too."

By the feeble light of the lantern that stood on a seat he surveyed his costume and frowned.

"Who said clothes don't make the man?" he demanded aloud. "They make him dance at any rate. It's against the rules of the game to do it in rags."

Through the trees he had brilliantly lighted vistas of a broad hotel-porch, whereon a crowd surged ceaselessly in all directions with but one common impulse—to keep in step with the band. Again Sam's feet rattled on the

flooring, and again his body rocked from side to side.

Then, abruptly, without waiting for the end of the music, he became rigid.

"Why not?" he demanded.

There was nobody to explain.

"Once more, why not? Now is the time for any grain of sense that may happen to be in my nut to speak up, or forever after do the oyster act. I wait—I still wait. I hear no answer. Therefore I have no sense. Therefore—why not?"

He went forward quickly, cast loose from the mooring-buoy, scrambled aft to the engine, cranked it with a nervous jerk at the fly-wheel, and headed out into the river.

For half an hour the launch ran down-stream, passing numerous craft that were obviously bound for the place of the whirling feet.

Sam maintained a close watch upon the procession. He was looking for a particular vessel, and eventually he believed he sighted it, for with a nod of satisfaction he altered his course and bore in toward the cluster of islands that included those of Mr. Witherbee, Mr. Davidson, and their neighbor vigilantes.

Now he extinguished his lantern—he never bothered with port and starboard lamps—and proceeded cautiously into the little archipelago that stood aloof from the other islands in its exclusiveness. Somewhere, probably in a dark shadow near a shore, lurked a patrol-boat.

It was nearly an hour later when the dimly marked hull of the boatman's launch, still devoid of any light, made its reappearance in midstream and laid a return course for the blaze of lights that beckoned hospitably to the islanders of the St. Lawrence. Opposite the hotel, Sam chose a new anchorage, farther from the shore and comfortably remote from that occupied by any other craft.

He relighted his lantern and chuckled as his glance fell upon a roughly

wrapped bundle in the bottom of the boat. Seating himself beside it, he ripped off the paper and brought to view a series of articles that caused him fresh mirth.

First came a tiny mirror not much larger than a pocket-glass. This he propped beside the lantern. Then came a brush and comb, and after them a collar and a soft-bosomed, spotless white shirt. He handled the linen gently with grimy fingers.

Next he produced those three unmistakable garments so persistently demanded in the lower left-hand corner of certain cards of invitation—"evening dress." And then a pair of shining pumps.

For a minute he studied his bearded visage in the mirror, a scrutiny that ended in a grimace.

"If I took these chinchillas up to the hotel the bouncer would toss me out on my neck," he muttered. "But I guess I can trim 'em up some. What did I do with the scissors?"

Fumbling among the remnants of the paper wrapper, however, failed to produce the weapon he sought. An exclamation of dismay escaped him as he again inspected his beard.

"Some of its simply got to come off," he told himself sternly. "We'll try a knife."

The knife was dull and rusty, while the beard was tough and tenacious. He groaned at the first stroke and barely suppressed a howl at the second. It was a two-handed proceeding, one set of fingers being employed in grasping a tuft of hair, while the other set, grimly gripping the knife, essayed the function of severing the tuft at a point half-way between the tip and the roots.

For several minutes he toiled in agony. Then nature weakly yielded to the pangs of pain and he tossed the knife overboard with an anathema.

"And still people go to beauty-doctors!" he growled, as he surveyed with disgust the meager results of his work.

"I'd singe it down a bit if I was

sure it wasn't inflammable," he added. "But I'd hate to turn myself into a torch. Besides, I might lose it all, and that won't do—yet."

Then came to the boatman, as often to other persons, an idea. He turned to his tool-box and extracted therefrom an instrument which he regarded for an instant with doubtful eyes. Gritting his teeth, he faced the mirror once more.

You can bale out an ocean with a thimble if you have sufficient time and persistence. A task relatively similar is that of trimming a beard with a pair of wire-cutters. Sam set himself to it.

Compared with the operations of the discarded knife, it was happily free from serious pain. But it was mournfully slow. A wire-cutter is designed to sever one wire at a time, so its jaw, though powerful, is short. To the boatman it seemed an almost impossible feat to make the instrument cut more than one hair at a time.

He toiled doggedly, bending close to the little glass and twisting his head into such positions as promised the most favorable opportunity for attack. Patience was finally rewarded with a certain degree of expertness. The beard slowly diminished in length to an extent visible to the naked eye. Whether he was really achieving a Van Dyke he did not dare to guess, but he was at least bringing it to a point at the chin, and was cropping away some of its shagginess on the cheeks.

The mustache was a distinct problem. Twice he caught his upper lip between the jaws of the cutter and—swore.

"There!" he exclaimed at last. "If anybody objects to the effect let him say so at his own risk. Before I'll trim any more hair with a wire-cutter I'll let the blamed thing grow until—yes, even until Carrie Catt is President!"

Stripping himself of a gray flannel shirt, he next performed ablutions in a tin water-bucket, alternating soap

with sand as he tried to reduce the grime that clung to his hands.

Again the wire-cutter came into play as he manicured his nails. Then there was a new period of torture when he drove the comb through locks that had not been raked for weeks.

To dress was the simplest part of all. He arrayed himself briskly in broadcloth and linen, even submitting patiently to the iron grip of the collar that encircled his neck. His quarters were so cramped that he sat most of the time in order to avail himself of the services of the mirror; but this was an inconvenience that gave him little concern. The worst was over, he reflected, until—

"For the love of Mike!"

That remark was in celebration of the discovery that he possessed every garment of a gentleman save a tie.

He viewed his image with a look of despair. His raiment fitted him astonishingly well, as nearly as he could judge. He had managed to button his collar into place without soiling it. The shirt-front was still immaculate. But no tie!

"You need a nurse," he told himself glumly. "What are you going to do now?"

Yet even at this catastrophe he would not acknowledge himself beaten.

"I suppose it's possible," he muttered, "to go ashore as I am and sand-bag a waiter, or even a guest if I can catch one alone. But that has risks, and I don't feel like taking too many to-night. Any kind of a tie would do; I wouldn't be particular. Come! Get clever now and invent something. Remember the wire-cutters!"

Twice he made a search of the pockets of his clothes, faintly hoping that one of them might conceal the article he lacked but his quest was unrewarded.

"Why does a man have to wear a necktie?" he raged. "And if he feels that he positively must wear one is he really a man? Talk about your slaves to fashion! You never see a necktie

on a lady—and you never see a gentleman without one!

"Yes, I said 'gentleman.' Just a while back I was a man now I'm a gentleman! Being one of those things, I have to have a necktie. I can't see that a man's clothes make anything out of him except a confounded coward."

Speech ceased suddenly as he spied a white object lying under a seat directly in front of him. He reached for it and held it up to the light.

It was a tiny and very thin square of linen, embroidered at the edges. As he brought it close to his eyes he became aware of the fact that it exhaled the faintest possible perfume.

"Bless the ladies!" he exclaimed. "One of 'em—I don't know which—has left me a handkerchief. We'll see what can be done."

With careful yet ruthless hands he tore the linen square into four strips of equal width. These he folded once lengthwise. Next he knotted them together, end upon end. The result was, at least in the semidarkness, something that resembled the necktie of a gentleman.

He grinned at himself triumphantly as he fashioned a bow out of the ends, after passing the strip of linen about his neck. There were frayed edges here and there, but they did not count against the general effect. It was a tie!

The boatman rose to his feet and glanced shoreward. Faintly there came across the water the quick, inspiring notes of a fox-trot.

"Time to hurry, I guess," he observed as he slipped forward and set the boat loose from her mooring.

As the Fifty-Fifty edged her way gently to the float he stepped out briskly and made the painter fast to a ring. Not until he reached the head of the gangway did he give a thought to a possible difficulty. Then it was forced upon him suddenly.

"Your ticket, sir," said an attendant deferentially, holding out his hand.

"Ticket?"

"Admission is by card, sir."

"Oh—of course." The boatman smiled graciously and waved his hand toward the float. "One of the other gentlemen in my party has the cards. He will be up directly."

The attendant bowed and Sam passed onward. He did not stop to note that the man at the gangway, after a period of reasonable waiting, peered down at the float and discovered it to be quite empty of persons; nor that the same functionary immediately took a few futile steps in the direction whither the lone guest had gone and strained his eyes in an endeavor to locate the man without a card.

Sam had anticipated these things. He had mingled with the trees and was approaching the hotel, not by the broad path, but by a circuitous route across the lawns.

He paused as he neared the broad veranda and studied the throng. It was an interval between dances; some of the guests were descending the steps to the lawn, which was overhung with paper lanterns. He saw no familiar face.

"We'll wait till the band plays," he murmured, "and then we'll give it a try-out."

Furtively his fingers groped their way to the tie and found it bravely in place. He shook out his cuffs, smoothed his shirt-bosom, and examined his glistening pumps. Thoughtfully, even a little anxiously, he stroked his beard. Then—

The band again. The boatman strode forward jauntily and made his way to the crowded porch.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT THE PAUL JONES DID.

ROSALIND had been sitting most of them out, instead of dancing them. There was not the least doubt the crowd was "mixed." Besides, after one experiment with Morton, one with the Jones boy, and a mere recollection

of other dances with Reggie Williams, Rosalind found that sitting out was the nearest approach to having a good time.

Incidentally it furnished odd minutes for reflection, for it was possible to despatch her squires upon errands and thus obtain solitude. Her fertility of invention, when it came to errands, was quite astonishing; at the fact that all of the errands were useless, her conscience was pricked not at all.

She was a woman with a problem that challenged her. Back at the Witherbees' they gave her no time for cogitation there seemed to be a universal obsession that somebody had to entertain her.

And Rosalind was a difficult person to entertain. She chose her own amusements and she resented having diversion thrust upon her.

It was not at all a matter of hardship—save to others—for Rosalind to be exceedingly untractable and unpleasant, both in manner and speech and the general loftiness and disdain of her bearing. If ever there lived a lady who needed, for the good of her soul and her conduct, to be clubbed briskly on the head by some conscientious caveman, dragged by the hair to his domicile, and set to pounding corn between two stones, that lady was Rosalind Chalmers.

And she was beginning to wonder if some such proceeding was not actually under way. The caveman, of course, was Sam. She knew he was not a real caveman, even, perhaps, of the kind that possess a veneer of civilization; yet he behaved like one.

His manner toward her was shocking and uncouth, as well as without explanation. He had contrived to involve her—she did not admit any of the contriving to be of her own—in a series of vulgar and embarrassing events; and she felt with a keen degree of uneasiness that he proposed to capitalize her misfortunes or misadventures in a manner as yet undisclosed and therefore peculiarly to be dreaded.

Who he was, what he was, even why he was, Rosalind did not know.

Had she been free to ask questions and to conduct a systematic investigation perhaps something might be learned. But necessity, by which she really meant the veiled threats of the boatman himself, bade her to be cautious.

In truth, Rosalind for once in her life was timid, although she would have perished rather than acknowledge it, even to herself. It was no physical fear, awakened by a dread of something that might happen to herself. Rather it was a more or less abstract apprehension, yet none the less poignant because of that fact.

It shaped itself into the idea that in some manner, and perhaps at some remote time, something would be done or said or even whispered that would bring into ridicule the Rosalind Chalmers who was known and recognized only by the fixed and inexorable standards of Hamersley's "Social Register." Not for all her wealth and her distinction would she be unmasked before her fellow denizens of the book!

The hotel-dance, therefore, while it forced her elbows to touch common clay, had a measure of consolation in giving her moments of solitude. She wanted to grapple with her problem. She did. It proved elusive and slippery and tireless. Worse, it grinned at her.

Yet Rosalind was game. Only once had fortitude failed her, and she blushed with hot shame when she thought of that unhappy time—the time during which she sat ten feet above the ground and yielded to the humiliating weakness of begging for release from a captivity that resulted directly from her own curiosity. That was an affair of bitter and vengeful memory; she had not even begun to pay off the smallest fraction of the score.

Tom Witherbee came to claim her. She had the bad grace to sigh as she rose. She hoped he would not step on her feet, but she was not optimistic;

for the Jones boy, who would not have been picked by the casual observer as an awkward person, had displayed the appalling accomplishment of stepping on both her feet at the same time, and doing it with no apparent physical effort or acceleration of breath.

They were hurrying swiftly across the floor, Rosalind trying to decide whether Tom Witherbee danced like a frog or a rabbit, when somebody blew a shrill whistle. With an abrupt apology she found herself released by her partner.

Then something horrible happened. She was a link in an endless chain of persons who had joined hands and were boisterously whirling in an undulating circle, like children playing "London Bridge."

Rosalind had heard of such things. In some places they called it the Paul Jones; in others it had equally undescriptive names. But by whatever term it was always the same; it meant changing partners every time a fiend blew a whistle—taking pot-luck with the crowd.

Another shrill toot sounded. The men began weaving in and out to the right, the women to the left. Rosalind was driven onward remorselessly by the necessity of saving her heels from being stepped on. She did not look like a lady who enjoyed being among the peasants and humble villagers. Her jaw was set at too grim an angle.

The whistle blew again at an instant when Rosalind's left hand was grasped firmly by one knight of the white shirt-front, while her right had just been seized by another. The signal, she knew, meant another partner. She wavered; it seemed like a chance to escape.

The captor of her left hand whirled about and stretched forth his arms. It was a fatal and short-sighted maneuver, for in doing so he released her fingers. Then with compelling force Rosalind found herself drawn

into a firm grip by the person who still retained her right hand. She was dancing again.

It had happened so swiftly that her half-formed intention to flee from the dance was never carried into execution. She was angry at herself, at Tom Witherbee, at the whole undignified affair.

And yet—this man could dance! She knew he was a stranger, although she had not even glanced above the second button on his shirt. Beyond doubt he was a vulgarian—one of the countless herd. But he could dance!

For the moment her irritation gave way to surprise. She had not expected this—after Morton and the Jones boy and Tom Witherbee. Here was a man who did not step on her feet, who did not employ her as a ram to batter his way through the swinging crowd, who did not crush her in a bearlike embrace, and who did not persistently fall out of time with the music.

He danced; he was neither a laggard nor a race-horse. He respected the functions of the band. To Rosalind it was like being rescued from a trampling mob and expertly piloted into a path of ease and safety and perpetual rhythm.

A common villager, perhaps; yet she yielded to the temptation. She also danced. And when Rosalind Chalmers really wanted to dance she was capable of attracting the eye and the envy of a Pavlova. She was even conscious of a pang of regret that it would be so brief, for the fiend with the whistle would soon be playing his killjoy tune. But it was an oasis at least; one tiny, bright spot in a desert of clumsiness.

Rosalind half-closed her eyes and abandoned herself to the sway of the music. She was almost enjoying herself. He was not in her set, of course; yet there was a distinction about his dancing that seemed for the moment to lift him to that exalted plane.

She dreaded the whistle; it meant

unknown terrors—perhaps even the Jones boy, who was circling near her with his arms full of a large lady in pink.

The ominous blast sounded.

"Please, if you don't mind—"

Rosalind marveled to find herself speaking, then checked her tongue and flushed.

A second later and she was marveling again, for her partner had understood. They were opposite one of the big French windows that led to the porch. As easily as if the maneuver had been rehearsed they swung through the opening and whirled away from the crowded room.

She glanced back and glimpsed another merry-go-round of couples, fated to be presently resolved into hopelessly mismated pairs. But Rosalind and the man who could truly dance went on and on, down the porch; still in the thrall of the rhythm that was so spirited and compelling.

"Thank you," she said.

He made no answer, save a quick pressure of her fingers. It was this silent acknowledgment of his gratitude that awakened Rosalind. Her fingers had, it is true, been pressed before, when she was taken unaware; but never by a stranger. She now remembered the pedestal she occupied in the world. She glanced upward.

For several seconds her vision remained fixed upon the most extraordinary necktie she had ever seen.

It was filmy and semitransparent. Also, it was ragged, frayed and rumpled. But—and this was its really amazing feature—it was marked with her own exquisitely embroidered monogram!

Her feet halted abruptly. She flung herself backward out of the arms of Sam, the boatman. He was smiling benignly.

"This—this—"

"Has been a great pleasure," he supplied, but the bow that accompanied the words was slightly satirical.

Rosalind stood gasping and angry.

"You dared!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You deliberately planned—"

"Sure I planned it. A man's got to do some figuring in this world if he wants to get anything."

She stared at the outraged handkerchief that graced a neck about which at that moment she would willingly have passed a rope. This creature had danced with her. She had been in his arms! And she had been seen there!

"I had to break into that dance without a partner," he explained lightly. "It was the only way to get you; to horn in and take a chance. I knew there wasn't any use asking you for a dance."

Her eyes blazed. Her spirit was raging, yet her wits had not deserted her. Perhaps they had not been noticed after all. The room was crowded and most of the dancers were heavily engrossed with their own woes. Chance might have been kind; she would soon know.

Meantime it was an atrocious risk to stand there talking to him. Yet if she fled she knew not what the man might do. Probably he would follow.

"I wish to talk with you," she said with sudden resolution.

"That 'll be another pleasure."

"But not here!"

"Well, there's a lot of good talking-places down on the lawn," he suggested.

She nodded grimly.

"Come along," he said cheerfully. And the creature offered her his arm. She affected not to notice the insult.

"Better take my arm—ma'am. It's customary."

She walked beside him, but did not touch him.

"We'll look more like a regular couple if you do, ma'am."

Still she paid no heed to his advice. He halted at the top of the steps.

"If you don't take my arm," he announced. "I'll grab you and shoot you right back into that dance, ma'am."

Trembling with anger, she took it.

He led her down the veranda-steps and out among the lantern-lit trees. They walked slowly and in silence for a minute, until Rosalind felt she was safe from possible observers at the hotel.

Then she whipped her hand from his sleeve and drew a pace away from him. Carefully she measured him with a glance which rested longest upon the monogrammed tie.

"Now I wish to know exactly what this means," she said sharply.

"It means just what happened," he answered, smiling.

She shook her head. She knew better than that, and she feared even more.

"Is this what you meant—in that note?"

"You mean where I said, 'Just wait'?"

"Yes."

"No, indeed; this is just a sort of extra, thrown in. When I said, 'Just wait' I meant it. Time's not up yet—just wait."

He grinned.

"Then I demand that you explain what it *does* mean."

"Why, I told you what it meant, ma'am. It meant that I wanted to dance—with you."

"Never!"

"But you're unjust to yourself. Honest, that's exactly what I came for, and it's exactly what I've done. And if you'll only let me have one more dance—a hesitation—I'll do almost anything in the world for you. Yes, I'll give you a free ride in my launch."

Rosalind shuddered.

"You came here for another purpose," she said.

"I see it's no use trying to make you believe," sighed Sam.

"You will be thrown out if the servants find you."

"That's a risk, of course. But it's worth it—for a dance, ma'am."

"You may even be arrested."

"That's possible, too—but I've had one dance anyway."

"I shall not permit you," she went on, ignoring him, "to do what you came here to do."

"Which is—"

"To rob people!"

The boatman stared at her, then broke into a laugh.

"You are here disguised—made up as a guest."

"Wrong, ma'am," he assured her. "I'm a man—made up as a gentleman."

"You came here to steal. You know it!"

"Raffles, eh? That's not a bad idea now. I hadn't thought of it; honest I hadn't. But now you propose it—"

"I didn't!"

"But you certainly did, ma'am. You've put the idea into my head when I hadn't the least notion of it. That makes you a sort of—"

"Stop!"

He shrugged resignedly.

"You're always snapping me up with that word," he complained. "You go and hand me an idea and then when I get ready to do something with it you tell me to stop."

"Will you tell me why you persist—in annoying me?"

"Do I? Why, I didn't think you were annoyed at all, back there while we were dancing. You even asked me not to turn you back into the scramble again, but to keep on as your partner."

"I never! You—"

"That's what you started to ask anyhow, ma'am. Because you remember you thanked me for doing it."

She flushed crimson.

"But I intended to do it anyway," he added complacently. "I wasn't going to lose a chance like that. They don't come often. I knew the minute I laid eyes on you that you could dance."

She hastily changed the subject.

"My handkerchief—where did you get it?" she demanded.

"Found it in my boat; lucky of me, too. I'd forgotten a tie. How does it look?"

Rosalind was beginning to sense the futility of the interview. She was rapidly losing control of it. Yet she was anxious to prevent the man from carrying out his very obvious purpose. Robberies among the guests might entail risks—for her. It was scarcely possible that nobody had seen her in the company of the boatman.

As she studied him however, she admitted to herself that he might not have been recognized. He was very different in appearance now. But aside from the possibility that none save herself had paid attention to him was his evident and persistent purpose to link her misfortunes with his misdeeds. She had the sensation of a captive held for ransom, yet kept in ignorance of what the ransom might be.

"You *must* go away," she told him firmly.

"Can't, ma'am. I've got a passenger to ferry."

"You must leave the grounds; go back to your boat."

"And I was just beginning to have a good time," he said ruefully, surveying his costume.

"I will pay you if you will go away."

"I haven't asked you to. I— Here comes Reggy!"

Rosalind uttered a little cry and turned swiftly. The bulky figure of Reginald Williams was moving toward them.

"I'll hide," said the boatman cheerfully. "Try and save another dance, will you? Don't forget."

He slipped away from her and disappeared behind a thick clump of shrubbery. A moment later Reginald arrived.

"I've been looking all over for you, Rosalind," he exclaimed. "What are you doing out here?"

"I wanted some air."

"And you came alone?"

"Yes—alone."

"Tom Witherbee was looking all over for you at the end of that last dance," said Reggy petulantly.

"You're not treating any of us decently to-night, Rosalind. First you won't dance, then you run away."

"I didn't wish to come in the first place."

"But you always used to dance. You used to dance with me, too. I know I'm not much good at it, but— Oh, hang it, Rosalind! I'm having a rotten time. There isn't a girl in the whole crowd that 'll dance with me. They all ask me to please sit down and talk to them, and they look at me as if there was something the matter with me."

"Perhaps you're not popular, Reggy," suggested Rosalind a little viciously.

"That worries me a lot so far as the rest of the crowd are concerned. But if I could only seem to be a little more popular with you—"

"Please don't start that again."

"I'm never going to stop it! Look here, Rosalind, it's not fair! Why, you won't even wear that bracelet, although you said you were crazy over it."

Rosalind bit her lip and remained silent.

"I haven't said anything about it before," continued Reggy grumblingly. "It seemed sort of kiddish to get sore. But you wore it once and I don't see why you can't wear it now. You don't have to be engaged to me to do that; it's not like wearing a ring. Why won't you wear it?"

"Why, I—"

Rosalind faltered in speech, then made a little gesture of annoyance.

"There's not another bracelet like it in the world," he went on. "It was just made for you."

"It was made for a mummy," corrected Rosalind.

"She wasn't a mummy—then. She was a live wire. I'll bet she wore it every day she took a walk around the pyramids. And don't forget—she was a princess, Rosalind."

"I haven't forgotten it; you won't let me. Besides, it was second hand."

That was a brutal thing for Rosalind

Chalmers to say, but she was in a savage and exasperated mood. She was far more disturbed over the absence of the bracelet than Reggy himself, but she could neither betray nor explain that fact. She would have given a small slice of her ample fortune if it were only upon her arm at that moment.

"Second hand!" snorted Reggy. "Second hand because a princess wore it? That's the first time you ever pulled that stuff on me."

"Reggy!"

"Oh, well, those are my sentiments at any rate. Perhaps they're not very elegantly expressed. But honestly, Rosalind, I'm sore. I think you might wear it once in a while. Will you wear something else for me, if I get it for you? A ring?"

"Oh, don't begin again, Reggy."

"I'm just picking up where I left off. Rosalind, why won't you marry me?"

"Because I do not choose to."

"But you know I love you."

Rosalind nodded her head wearily.

"So why not?" he persisted.

"Reggy, you are positively dense," she said hopelessly. "Am I to marry a man just because he loves me? Suppose I do not love him."

"Well, you can come as near to loving me as you can anybody, I guess. I wouldn't expect you to love me a great deal. I don't think you're that kind."

"You mean, I suppose," she said coldly, "that I am incapable of affection."

"Oh, come; not like that, you know," broke in Reggy stumblingly. "But—well— Oh, I can't put it the way it ought to be put, Rosalind. Of course you *could* love anybody, if you wanted to. But what I mean is, that— You're not apt to."

"Thank you for making it so clear, Reggy."

"And I'd be willing to get along with just—just—"

"Just toleration, I imagine."

"Yes, toleration!" he blurted. "So long as it was from you."

"Well, I'm not in a tolerant mood at present," said Rosalind. "Will you take me back to the hotel?"

"Will you dance with me?"

"I think not."

"Will you wear the bracelet then?"

"Well—perhaps."

As they moved away the boatman stepped from his hiding-place.

"Bracelet," he muttered. "That's funny now. I wonder if it could be the one."

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN SAM CAME IN HANDY.

HE waited until Rosalind and her gloomy suitor passed from view, then made for the hotel by another entrance. The door by which he obtained access to the building led into a broad lobby, where superior clerks yawned behind a counter that resembled a bar, and where there was a newsstand, also other details of hotel-equipment arranged with a view to reducing the amount of Federal reserve in individual depositaries.

Sam walked through the lobby at a casual pace. He was at ease with a cigarette between his lips. The make-up had been tested and had not yet buckled under the strain. None save Rosalind had paid the least attention to the tie, which argued powerfully for its propriety.

At the farther end of the lobby was a great glass case, supported upon a table. Within the case were many things. The boatman viewed them deliberately.

The variety was rather extraordinary. There were things made of leather, of linen, of silk, of worsted, of metal and of stone; things that were old, others that were middle-aged, still others that were palpably new; things that were ugly, arrayed beside things that were pretty; big things, little things, nondescript things. Some of

them bore labels; others presented themselves to the eye without explanation or excuse.

He lingered at one end of the case for a full minute, but his vision did not penetrate the transparency of the glass. It was concerned wholly with the case itself—its joints, its locks, its sliding doors.

Then his glance roved about the lobby. He counted the number of persons that crossed it within a given interval and the directions in which they went, as well as those from which they came. He noted the varying degrees of occupation among the clerks, the news-stand girl, the flower-stand girl, the porters and the bell-boys. He studied the lights, the doorways and the windows. He made a mental note of distances and directions.

After that he strolled lazily back to the porch, where he made a topographical inspection that involved the smoking of an entire cigarette.

"Now for the master mechanic," he said as he moved along the veranda in the direction of the dancing-room.

But the master mechanic was busy, quite beyond his reach. She was one of a group gathered about the portly figure of Mr. Davidson and she was listening to his words.

"It's been done again!" affirmed Mr. Davidson with gestures. "And the patrol is supposed to be on the job! Right under the noses of James and Eliza, too! And here I am, going away to-night! I'll not stand for it."

Rosalind signaled to Polly Dawson, and Polly invented a reason for leading Reggy Williams beyond ear-shot. For Reggy's heart must be subjected to no stresses other than those that might incidentally be imposed by the charms of Polly herself.

"Anything gone this time?" asked Tom Witherbee.

"Clothes!" exploded Mr. Davidson. "My room ransacked, Billy's room turned topsyturvy, bureau drawers dumped out on the floor and all that sort of thing."

"But when?"

"Since we came up here, of course! I had to send the boat back for my grips. I'm going away to-night and I forgot 'em. And then they saw what happened. A fine mess! I'd like to know what good it did to organize. He slipped right in under their noses and slipped out again."

"And no clue?"

"Clue—"

Mr. Davidson checked the word that was intended to follow immediately thereafter and glared at the Jones boy, who was the questioner.

"Clue!" he said, beginning afresh. "I've quit looking for clues. I'm looking for results. And I can get bunches of one and none of the other. And here I am, headed for Denver to-night, and nobody but a pack of fool servants to look after the place. I suppose the island 'll be gone when I get back."

"It's appalling," said Marjorie Winter.

"You're right, ma'am," declared Mr. Davidson truculently. "It's worse than appalling. It's hell! Excuse me. But that's what it is."

"Couldn't you get detectives?"

"Detectives my eye! I never knew one yet that could detect anything except an expense-account. No, sir; I've sent for Billy."

"His nephew, Billy Kellogg," explained Mrs. Witherbee in a whisper to Rosalind. "The one that was sent away."

"Hated to do it, too," said Mr. Davidson. "But something had to be done. Wired down to Hastings & Hatch a little while ago to ship him up here the first thing to-morrow. Somebody's got to sit on the lid while I'm gone."

"He's learned some sense, I hear. Got a report only this morning. Sticking to his job like a nailer; that's why I hate to pull him off it. But I'll ship him back—the young rascal! I'll not spoil him again. Just as soon as I can get back from Denver, off he goes to the bank again."

"You think he'll be able to manage?" ventured Mrs. Witherbee.

She had never met Billy Kellogg in the flesh, but had heard reports.

"He'll manage or I'll break his neck," said Mr. Davidson savagely. "And I guess I won't have to do that either. Why, ma'am, he's a changed person, so Hastings & Hatch tell me. On the job at eight-thirty every morning, half an hour for lunch, sticking to it till five and six o'clock every night. A regular horse for work, ma'am! Hang it if I don't think he's earned a vacation—the scoundrel!"

Rosalind strolled away from the group as Mr. Davidson prepared to make his departure for Clayton. She wondered if the boatman would have the hardihood to show himself again in his stolen raiment.

Slow but persistent footfalls behind her warned her that she was being followed. Finally she turned and beheld Mr. Morton.

"Strolling?" he asked in vacuous tones.

She answered with a nod that was not meant to encourage.

"I might go along?" he suggested.

"You might, I suppose."

Rosalind once more sought the cool softness of the grass underfoot, with the tall and evidently preoccupied Englishman at her elbow.

"Oh, I say, Miss Chalmers," he exclaimed abruptly after they had walked in silence for several minutes.

"Yes?"

"Would you—er—do you think you could—er—marry me?"

Rosalind eyed him with frank astonishment. A smile trembled on her lips, but she did not allow it to blossom.

"I—er—love you tremendously, you know, Miss Chalmers."

"Really?"

"Oh, as sure as you live. Do you think you could, you know?"

"I'm afraid I neither would nor could, Mr. Morton," she said placidly.

"Hum! Ha! By Jove, but that's beastly hard luck, Miss Chalmers!"

Rosalind hovered between offense and amusement. She did not know whether the eighteenth or the nineteenth offer was a compliment or otherwise. She compromised by admitting to herself that she was bored.

"Rotten luck," he repeated musingly, stroking his yellow mustache.

"You speak as if it were a game of chance."

"I—er— Oh, I beg pardon. No offense whatever intended—really. Only you see these things go awfully hard with a fellow, Miss Chalmers."

"After less than a week's acquaintance?"

"Ah, but you know I'm an impetuous chap. That's the worst of it."

Rosalind laughed in spite of her efforts to check the outburst. He did not appear to notice it, so wholly was he engrossed with his own misfortune—and his mustache.

"Then I suppose there's no hope?"

"Oh, none whatever!"

"Thanks awfully, you know. It's downright good of you to take it in such a sporting way."

"I'm—I'm trying to bear it," she said, choking.

With a deep bow Mr. Morton excused himself and stalked silently away. Rosalind looked after him, shaking with mirth.

"That makes the score two tonight," remarked a voice from behind her.

She turned quickly. The boatman had appeared as if by magic.

"Eavesdropper!" she said contemptuously.

"Couldn't help it the first time," he explained. "Had to hide from Reggy. Do you always turn him down that way?"

She ignored the question.

"As for the second case," added Sam, jerking his finger in the direction of the departing Englishman, "I'll admit I followed you. But it wasn't for the purpose of overhearing a man get his death-sentence. I wanted to see you about something."

"I don't propose to be annoyed by you any further."

"It's something important, ma'am."

As she started to walk toward the hotel he whispered a single word:

"*Bracelet!*"

Rosalind halted in her tracks.

"I thought that would stop you," he nodded.

"What do you know about a bracelet?" she demanded.

"I've seen one."

"Where?"

He looked mysterious and answered her with a question:

"Do you want me to show it to you?"

"You mean—*my* bracelet?"

"A sort of hand-me-down bracelet," he grinned.

"A gold bracelet, carved—"

"One that they burgled a tomb for, perhaps, ma'am."

Rosalind was afire with excitement.

"Where did you see this thing? What do you mean? Have you—stolen it?"

"No, indeed. I haven't laid a finger on it, ma'am. But I wouldn't be surprised if I'd laid eyes on it—the one that Reggie was sore about."

Rosalind thought swiftly. Neither Gertrude nor Polly was wearing it that evening, she remembered.

Where was it? She had a numbing sense of misgiving.

"Show it to me," she commanded.

"Of course it's possible I've made a mistake, ma'am, but—"

"Where is it?"

"Perhaps it's in the hotel."

"Who is wearing it?"

"Nobody."

"Is it in your pocket?" suspiciously.

The boatman laughed.

"I told you I hadn't touched it," he said.

Rosalind was losing control of her little trifle of patience.

"Take me to it!" she said peremptorily.

He led the way toward the veranda. She followed as far as the steps, then

halted. Sam divined the cause of her hesitation. He laughed once more good-naturedly.

"I see you don't want to take another chance with me in there," he remarked, pointing. "In a way I don't blame you. That's a mighty catchy little thing the band's playing. I've almost a mind to take a dance in payment. But we'll postpone that, ma'am."

"Now, do you see that second doorway? No; the second to the right. It's the office entrance. Go through it and walk straight back until you reach the rear of the lobby. You'll see a glass case there. Take a look at some of the things in it."

She started swiftly up the steps.

"I'll be out here among the trees," he called after her. "I've got an idea you'll want to see me again."

Rosalind hurried along the porch and entered the second doorway to the right. Just beyond the threshold she paused and her glance swept the lobby. Yes, there was a glass case at the farther end. She stepped forward without further hesitation.

There, its aristocratic beauty undimmed by the cheap, gaudy gewgaws that hedged it about, lay her bracelet!

She was too bewildered even to gasp, but stood rigid as a statue, staring. Her bracelet—lying in the midst of a tawdry collection of jewelry, silverware, and brass ornaments!

What did it mean? How did it get there?

As she stood in awful fascination, a bell-boy approached.

"The sale is to-morrow afternoon, ma'am," he said.

"The sale!"

Rosalind spoke so explosively that the boy was startled.

"Yes, ma'am; at three o'clock. There's the sign."

He pointed to a placard that rested on the top of the case. She read:

These beautiful articles in this case, donated through a spirit of humanity by residents and summer visitors at

the islands, will be sold at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon for the benefit of the war sufferers in Europe.

If you cannot add your mite to the collection, you are cordially invited to attend the sale and become a purchaser, and incidentally a helper in a noble cause.

Mr. Heinrich Schmidt of Chicago has kindly consented to act as auctioneer.

Rosalind clutched at something to steady herself and found that she was grasping the sleeve of the bell-boy.

"Ouch, ma'am!" he exclaimed as her fingers bit sharply into his arm. "Would you like a glass of water, ma'am?"

She released her victim and shook her head. The boy saluted and went back to his bench.

Horror of horrors! And the Witherbees had done this thing! Her bracelet—that dull circlet of gold that once girdled the arm of a princess of Egypt—that strange and beautiful bauble that had not its match in the whole world—was to be vulgarly hawked to a rabble by a grain-broker named Schmidt who came from Chicago!

The picture that flashed into her mind made her shudder with disgust. There would be a bargain-counter rush, a noisy clamor of voices shouting offers—putting a price on *her* bracelet! And it would be held aloft in the fat, ruthless hand of Schmidt, dangled before the eyes of a mob, while he goaded them to bid higher and higher!

"Never!" she muttered through clenched teeth.

Valiant resolution! Yet in the same instant she realized her impotence to carry it into effect. The case was securely locked. Besides, there were other persons in the lobby. She felt sure at the very least that the bell-boy was watching her.

She could summon the Witherbees, of course—they who had done this awful thing—but that meant confessions and complications—and ridicule!

She might come to-morrow and buy her own bracelet, rub elbows with a scrambling and motley crowd, and match her lungs and her purse against the hardiest of them. But her very soul shrank from that; she knew that she could not do it. Better never see the bracelet again.

Yet Rosalind would not for an instant yield weakly to what seemed the inevitable and permanent loss of her dearly prized property. She was brimming with fight, even though she did not know how to fight, or whom.

"I'll get it!" she whispered grimly. "I'll get it if I have to burn down the hotel."

As she glanced helplessly about her, her eyes met those of Reggy Williams, approaching from the doorway that led to the ballroom.

Here was fresh dismay. Reggy could not—must not—look into that fateful showcase! He was coming to her swiftly, and Rosalind, pulling herself together sharply, advanced to meet him.

"What's the attraction?" he asked, looking over her shoulder.

"Oh, nothing. Let's go out on the porch."

"But what's the stuff in the glass case?" he persisted, trying to dodge past her.

She grasped him firmly by the arm.

"Please take me outside, Reggy," she said. "I want some air. Nothing there but some things they're going to sell for the Belgians. They're—not interesting."

It was Rosalind who took Reggy outside, rather than Reggy who assisted Rosalind. She did it with an expedition and a determination that puzzled him, particularly when, having walked him to the farther end of the porch, she turned him over to Polly Dawson with a severe injunction—whispered—to make him sit down and keep quiet for half an hour.

Then with a swift seizure of opportunity Rosalind escaped to the lawn and walked out among the trees, stern

purpose in her heart and a whirl of desperate ideas in her brain. She was looking for Sam!

CHAPTER XVI.

ROUGH STUFF.

"YOU'RE quite sure it belongs to you?" asked Sam, his scrutiny of Rosalind's face pointed to the verge of annoyance.

"I have said so," she answered with finality.

A fifteen-minute conversation had preceded.

"It's not the kind of a job I'd pick of my own choosing," he remarked reflectively.

"I tell you, it *must* be done!"

"Why not give me a handful of money and let me go in to-morrow and buy it?"

"No! It's mine!"

"Why not claim it, then?"

"I cannot. I—"

He waited patiently for the remainder of the sentence.

"Oh, what is the use of explaining?" she exclaimed irritably. "The point is, it belongs to me. I must have it. I *will* have it! Why should you haggle over a question as to the real owner—after what you have done?"

"Which is to say—"

"Come," said Rosalind. "You and I have no need to beat about the bush in this matter. You are perfectly well aware that I know what you are. I'm not blind, or even dense."

"No, ma'am," he said meekly enough.

"The point is, you know how to do it."

"I suppose that's a compliment."

"Judge it as you please. It may be a compliment or a reproach. I'm not talking about the ethics of the matter, I'm talking about results."

"Well, what is there in it for me?" he demanded bluntly.

"I'll pay you!"

"How much?"

"Why—almost anything you ask."

"You don't drive a very sharp bargain, ma'am," he commented.

"I am not accustomed to dealing with—"

"Thieves?"

Rosalind nodded.

"Well, it might be done," he admitted slowly. "But it has risks. And it can't be done alone."

"It will be necessary for you to have help?"

"Yes! that's certain. I'll need you, in fact."

Rosalind evinced no hesitation. She was thinking only of her bracelet, in the winning of which she was willing to burn all bridges.

"Very well; what do you want me to do?"

The boatman eyed her curiously.

"It depends," he answered, "on just what we figure to do. Of course, we could crack the case and make a run for it. But that's too simple to get away with. No chance."

"We could get a crowd into the lobby perhaps, and then try it. That's a little better. Or we might be able to manage to get everybody out of the lobby, even the clerks, and make a stab at it that way. I'm not very strong for that, either."

"Couldn't you wait until the hotel was closed?" asked Rosalind.

It did not occur to her for an instant that she was plotting against the criminal law.

He shook his head, after appearing to consider the suggestion.

"There's always a bell-hop on duty," he said. "I don't see how it could be done, unless we both hang around until after the crowd is gone. And I suppose you've got to go home with your people."

"That's true," she admitted.

"No," said the boatman. "If it's going to be done at all it must be pulled off while the crowd is still here. That's a cinch. I may be willing to take a chance after hours somewhere else, but not here. It seems to me if we're going

to get that bracelet we've got to make a different sort of play. How about stealing the whole show-case?"

Rosalind stared.

"That is, stealing it for a while," he continued. "I don't mean carting all that truck away; we wouldn't know what to do with it. Besides, most of it isn't worth anything. You don't happen to be wearing a badge, do you?"

"A badge?"

"One of those red and gold affairs that say something about the Belgians."

"Of course not."

"We need a couple," he reflected.

"Will you get them?"

"Where?"

"Well, a lot of the men are wearing them. I've seen a few on the women, too. You might go in and dance a couple of times."

"You mean—"

The boatman nodded.

"Impossible!"

"Not a bit, ma'am, if you'll only dance the way you did with me. You can make a man forget everything else except his feet. It'll be dead easy. He'll be in a trance. All you do when you've got him under the influence is to cop his badge. And be sure to get two; that means two dances."

Rosalind was unconvinced.

"Tell me more," she commanded.

For another five minutes the boatman talked earnestly. She hesitated doubtfully and shook her head several times, yet she listened. When the wavering instants came upon her she thought of the bracelet. Whenever she remembered that fresh resolution reinforced her soul.

"It is despicable—hateful!" she said.

"But it's reasonably sure," he supplemented.

"And then—if I get them?"

"Meet me at the end of the porch."

She hesitated.

"Of course, it really belongs to me," she remarked parenthetically.

Sam chuckled.

"Now you're getting back to the morals of it. That won't get you anything, ma'am."

"But—"

"Take the bull outside and shoot it," he interrupted tersely. "What difference does it make whether you own it or not? Maybe you do; perhaps you don't. I'm not asking you to produce any title-deeds. The point to aim at is—get the bracelet!"

"It may belong to the Queen of England for all I know. I don't think you'd be particular if it did, provided you wanted it. You asked me to go shares on this job—"

"I didn't!"

"I guess that's right, too. You wanted me to do it alone. That's worse because you were sticking all the chances on me. But so far as stealing it goes, you'll have to admit that I didn't suggest it. I only told you where the thing was. Then you make a proposition to hire me."

She flushed, but remained silent.

"So it becomes a fifty-fifty deal," he concluded.

Rosalind thought of the name of the boatman's launch. It assumed a new significance.

"So it's up to you to get those two badges and get 'em quick," he declared brusquely. "I don't care how; only I suggested a way. If you can think of a better one, go to it."

Rosalind compressed her lips and started toward the hotel.

"Any time you get cold feet," he advised, "just remember the bracelet."

It was superfluous advice. There was no fear she would forget it. It constituted her whole sustaining motive.

Three dances went by, and the boatman still waited under the trees. The music had heralded a fourth when he sighted a tall, slim figure in white approaching with quick steps.

"Here they are," said Rosalind shortly.

She thrust two red-and-gold badges into his hand so roughly that the pins pricked him.

"It took you three dances," he grumbled as he sucked one of his fingers.

"Well, I got them!" she exclaimed fiercely. "Now let me see you do something."

For answer, he coolly pinned one of the badges against her snow-white gown and stepped back to study the result.

"Now we belong," he commented as he affixed the second badge to the lapel of his coat. "Of course, it makes us just like common folks, but we can't be particular, considering what we're after. Did your partners happen to notice that they'd been frisked?"

Rosalind forbore to answer; she was outraged and incensed.

"Remember, now!" he cautioned. "We're both on the committee. What we say goes. And if you try to run out on me, look out, ma'am."

Her figure stiffened perceptibly.

"Not afraid?" he asked.

"I'm rather inclined to believe that you are," said Rosalind coldly.

"Come on, then," said the boatman.

Together, they walked into the lobby of the hotel. All of the dancers were elsewhere, but the clerks and the bell-boys were in their accustomed places. Across the lobby, their red badges proclaiming ostentatious sympathy with a war-stricken hemisphere, the boatman and Rosalind Chalmers made their way at a deliberate pace. There was a flush in her cheeks—not of guilt, but of shame. If any one should see!

"Loosen up a little," he cautioned in a whisper. "Act human. Remember you're just common folks now. Smile at me; you're not headed for a funeral. That's better; that's more natural."

They paused in front of the glass case. For a second time Rosalind's glance rested upon her bracelet. The sight filled her with new courage.

Sam turned and beckoned authoritatively toward a uniformed youth who lolled on a bench.

"Yes, sir," said the boy as he advanced and saluted.

"Get some of the other boys or some porters. We want this case moved," he said briskly.

The boy eyed him doubtfully.

"It's to be taken into the ballroom, isn't it?" inquired the boatman, turning to Rosalind.

"Of course," she answered.

"It's getting no display here at all," said Sam, turning to the boy. "The committee wants it where the guests can see it. Hurry up, now. Get some boys."

"I'll speak to the manager," said the bell-hop.

"Mr. Saunders? No need; I've already spoken to him. And he said to make you boys jump. Incidentally, there's half a dollar apiece in it for you. Step lively!"

The boy was galvanized. He made a swift gesture to a uniformed group on the other side of the lobby, and was joined by four other boys.

"Now, boys," explained the boatman, "this case is to be moved into the ballroom. We want it to get a little advertising. You must be very careful with it."

The five boys nodded and ranged themselves about the table.

"You'll see why you must be careful if you look inside," continued Sam. "There's a lot of valuable stuff in there, boys—stuff that can be broken if it's handled roughly. Stuff that might be lost, too—and couldn't be replaced."

"See that pair of earrings? They'll sell for fifty dollars, easy. See those brass candlesticks? They're worth twenty-five. And if there wasn't anything else in the case, that bracelet is enough to make you careful. It's worth a hundred at the very least; perhaps five hundred. Now, do you understand?"

The five boys were staring in fas-

cination at the magic bauble. The boatman made a swift scrutiny of their faces.

To Rosalind his harangue was without meaning. She tapped one foot restlessly upon the floor and looked about her.

"Well, if you're sure you're not going to drop it, grab hold," advised the boatman.

The captain boy and his four assistants laid hold of the case and raised it gingerly from the table.

"Which way, sir?"

"By way of the porch," said Sam. "Careful, now! I'm responsible for this stuff, and I'd hate to have to replace some of it—especially that bracelet. That's it; steady! Take it easy."

The five boys moved slowly across the lobby to the main entrance, clinging grimly to the glazed box that contained so many wonderful trinkets. Their eyes, hitherto incurious concerning its contents, were now fascinated.

"Nothing like a little judicious barking," whispered the boatman to Rosalind as they followed in the rear of the procession.

The owner of the bracelet was mystified. Something, she knew, had not been confided to her. But there was no time to demand an explanation.

Out upon the porch the burden-bearers, breathing rapidly, turned in the direction indicated by Sam, and began a laborious journey between tables and chairs.

"Take it slowly," cautioned the boatman. "There's no hurry."

"If we don't hurry, we'll have to set it down!" gasped the captain. "It's heavy!"

"Tired, eh? Well, take a rest. No use running a chance of dropping it. Here—not that way! Tilt the end of it up on the rail. There! Now ease up on it. That's it. Take a breathing-spell."

The show-case lay balanced across the railing of the veranda, while five boys recovered breath. One of them

steadied it with a hand, while four mopped their brows. Sam bent over the gaudy display beneath the glass, and seemed to be talking to himself.

"Good stuff, some of that. It ought to sell high. I wouldn't mind bidding on that brooch myself. But the bracelet—whew! That's going high, I'll bet. Why, I know a dealer—"

The boatman's foot slipped and he lurched heavily against the case. There was a warning cry from the boy who balanced it upon its precarious perch, echoed by a sharp exclamation from Rosalind as the case upended and slid gently over the railing. An instant later it landed with a jingling crash on the gravel path, six feet below.

Sam swore fervently at his own carelessness.

"Quick!" he commanded. "Get down there, you, and pick up the stuff!"

Five boys scrambled over the railing and leaped to the ground. Rosalind, almost in a frenzy of solicitude for her precious property, started to run toward the nearest steps. She was pulled back.

"S-sh! Stay here!" commanded the boatman. "Watch!"

He leaned over the railing and looked down upon the wreckage, amid which his uniformed helpers were already on their knees, heedless of broken glass and intent only upon retrieving the treasures that had come such a melancholy cropper.

Bit by bit they rescued the miscellaneous donations to the cause of Belgian relief. Bit by bit they tossed aside the broken glass and piled in a loose heap the gaudy gifts that had been so tenderly guarded.

"Watch!" repeated Sam in a whisper.

Rosalind watched, but she was still bewildered. A moment later her lips parted and her eyes widened with alarm.

"Keep still!" cautioned her companion. "I saw it, too. It's the black-haired one, isn't it?"

She nodded.

"That's the way I made it. I spotted him back in the lobby," said the boatman in a low tone. "Leave him to me."

"But another one—that one"—she pointed—"has a ring, and I think—"

"Hush! What do you care? It's the one with the black hair for us."

A minute later the captain looked up at the watchers.

"We've got it all picked up, sir," he said. "What 'll we do with it?"

"Carry it back to the lobby," said the boatman. "It was my fault; I'll explain how it happened. We'll see if we can get another case."

"Go get an omnibus tray," ordered the head bell-boy.

A uniformed youth with black hair detached himself from the group and hurried to obey. But he did not move in the direction of the dining-room. Instead, having ascended to the porch, he headed in an opposite direction and made off at a brisk pace.

"I'll attend to him," said the boatman hurriedly to Rosalind. "It's all right. Beat it, you! Take off that badge and make yourself scarce. That's what I'm going to do as soon as I interview our enterprising young friend. See you to-morrow, maybe. Don't worry—pal."

He was gone down the porch. Rosalind looked after him doubtfully. Then, with a swift movement, she tore the red badge from her dress, concealed it in her hand, and moved off in an opposite direction.

There was nothing more to be done save escape. The enterprise was on the knees of the gods. Only one thing was certain—Mr. Schmidt, of Chicago, would never desecrate the property of a princess.

In a dark angle of the porch a wriggling boy in uniform was pinned against the wall by a sinewy hand that grasped his shoulder none too gently.

"Fork it out!" hissed the boatman.

"I—I—"

"You little crook, I saw you! Come on! Kick in with it!"

"But I didn't mean—honest!"

"Produce! I don't care what you meant. I saw you pipe it, you young burglar! Ah—I thought so!"

The boatman held a heavy yet flexible object close to his eyes to make sure. Then he slipped it into his pocket.

"If I catch you around this hotel again it 'll be you for the lockup!" he growled as he swung the youth away from the wall and held him at arm's length.

Then the bell-boy was booted off into the gloom.

The boatman waited until the sound of terrified footsteps faded away. He laughed, a second later, as he vaulted the railing to the sod beneath and vanished among the trees on the darkest part of the lawn.

CHAPTER XVII.

THICKENING MYSTERY.

THE Witherbee yacht was nearing Clayton, with Rosalind as its only passenger. Principally, its errand was to meet William Kissam Kellogg, the nephew who had been summoned so peremptorily from his banking career in New York to take charge of the Davidson place.

Although the Witherbees were not acquainted with the young man, they had volunteered to take charge of his comfort and entertainment while his uncle was in the West. He was arriving on a midday train.

Rosalind was going shopping, she told Mrs. Witherbee. If she was also seeking temporary escape from a household where she found herself somewhat bored, her shopping errands were none the less *bona fide*. And if, further, she had a certain curiosity concerning Billy Kellogg, even a proper regard for the truth did not require her to say so, for she really had things to buy.

There had been less commotion over the exploit of the glass case than either she or the boatman expected. Thus far, it passed for a mishap. The fact that none of the bell-boys was able to point out the two badge-wearing conspirators, because of their disappearance, occasioned no unusual comment, for there were so many committee-members.

Nor did it appear that anybody possessed an inventory of what the glass case contained. As for the boy who did exactly what Sam expected him to do, there was nothing to be feared in that quarter. He was a frightened and chastened youth.

Rosalind had not yet recovered her bracelet, but, curiously perhaps, she found more comfort in the reflection that it was in the hands of a burglar than she would had it remained to be sold by the volunteer auctioneer from Chicago. To make sure that her conscience would not trouble her, she contributed a liberal cash donation to the Belgian fund.

Just when and how the boatman would deliver her property she had not been informed; but, although she was still undecided as to whether his major profession was that of spy, smuggler, or thief, or whether he skilfully combined all three vocations, she had a rather illogical yet firmly grounded belief that the time was not distant when her bracelet would again be clasped upon her arm.

Her shopping-tour in Clayton concerned itself mainly with the purchase of postage stamps. She maintained a furtive watch for Sam, but got no sight of him, nor did she see his boat at any of the wharfs. When she returned to the Witherbee yacht the new passenger was aboard.

He was sitting forward, under an awning, chewing an unlighted cigar and shifting his feet restlessly as he glanced about him. Rosalind was disappointed; he was not at all as she had imagined him. He was short and chunky, with a tendency to flesh lam-

enable in one so young. He did not look in the least devilish.

"He's as meek as the *White Knight*," thought Rosalind as she studied him. "The reformation must be very great."

He did not see her until she was close to him, and then it was to greet her with a startled leap from his chair and an embarrassed scrutiny.

"Mr. Kellogg, I believe?"

"Why—eh?"

"You are Mr. Kellogg, whom the Witherbees are expecting?"

"Certainly; of course. I beg your pardon."

Rosalind smiled. Evidently he was one of the difficult kind.

"I am Miss Chalmers," extending her cool fingers to him.

He shook hands nervously.

"You got Mr. Witherbee's telegram aboard the train?"

"Oh, yes; I got it. Very kind of him, too."

"They thought it would be rather lonely for you over at your own island, while Mr. Davidson is away, with none but the servants there."

"It would, it would," he assented quickly.

"So I am to bring you down to Mr. Witherbee's, where he hopes you will become his guest for as long a period as you find it agreeable. If it is necessary for you to be over at your own island at night, it is only a few minutes' run in the launch."

"I'm—I'm not sure it will be necessary at all," he broke in earnestly.

Rosalind was faintly puzzled. She could not understand Mr. Davidson's supreme confidence in this nephew as a protector of his island home. He did not seem in the smallest degree anxious for the task.

"You have heard about all the trouble, of course?"

"Er—what?"

"About the burglaries and the smuggling and so forth?"

"Oh, yes—yes! But my uncle didn't give any details. He's—he's gone, I suppose?"

There was anxiety in his voice that did not escape her. Rosalind concluded that Billy Kellogg was very much afraid of his uncle.

"He's well on his way to Denver by this time," she assured him. "He has been speaking very well of you, Mr. Kellogg."

"Yes?"

"Indeed, yes! He has told us frequently about your success in New York."

"Has he? Good of him, I'm sure."

"He was reluctant to take you from your work," she continued, determined, if it were possible, to put this young man at his ease. "He felt that, perhaps, you would not want to come."

"I didn't!" he answered explosively.

Rosalind studied him in silence.

"You find banking—interesting?"

"Tremendously!"

"That's odd," she said before she thought.

"How's that? What?"

"I beg your pardon," said Rosalind. "I didn't mean it exactly that way. Only— Well, you know, we've heard about you, Mr. Kellogg, and we rather pictured a young man who wouldn't be particularly absorbed by anything so serious and important as running a bank."

He blushed vividly.

"I hope I haven't been clumsy in alluding to anything unpleasant," she went on quickly. "I didn't intend—"

"Oh, not at all; it's all right, I assure you. I don't mind. Only—I've changed; that's all."

"Were you very wicked?"

She asked the question gravely; the mischief lay only in her eyes.

"Oh—I—hum! Why, I don't know that I was actually *wicked*."

He was squirming most unaccountably for a young man with a Billy Kellogg past, and Rosalind was speedily becoming more mystified. She felt that she was looking upon a miracle—and was not entirely sure that she approved of it.

Wickedness, or what passed for it in the average youth of her world, was infinitely more entertaining than the goodness of a young man who patterned his life after the hero of the *Rollo* books.

"You were simply thoughtless, I presume," she remarked.

"Thoughtless? Indeed I was—very."

"Tell me about it."

Rosalind was not wholly averse to the practise of a woman's wiles. Here was a young man, she decided, who was vulnerable to the most ancient wile of all—the flattery of feminine sympathy and curiosity.

Yet the curiosity on her own part was genuine enough. Billy Kellogg had been sent away because of an episode which included H. Evelyn Morton as one of its actors, and Rosalind was still unsatisfied in her quest for information about the Englishman.

"There isn't much to tell," he answered diffidently.

"You may light that cigar," she informed him.

He was still chewing upon it abstractedly. He availed himself of the permission, but without any advance toward ease of manner.

"They said that you gambled—rather heavily," she suggested.

"Oh—that!" he exclaimed.

"But did you?"

"I suppose so. There—there wasn't much else to do."

"I'm sure there wasn't," she said sympathetically. "It must have been quite dull so early in the season."

"That was it—dull," he assented. "You see—er—I wasn't working then, and I had to have something to fill in my time."

"And you lost—"

"Ten thousand dollars."

She arched her eyebrows slightly. It was a sum that did not impress Rosalind as stupendous, but the tone in which he mentioned it was one of awe.

"You are a more desperate person than I imagined," she said chidingly.

He looked at her, startled; then flushed again.

"You see, it was a year's income—a whole year!"

"Was it? I hadn't heard. How interesting!"

"I don't know whether you are familiar with the circumstances, Miss Chalmers," he went on slowly.

"Not a single one—but I'd like to know awfully. That is, if you don't mind. One is so apt to get false impressions when one does not understand."

"Why—er—yes," he sighed. "You see, I have an income—ten thousand dollars a year. The estate itself is in the hands of a guardian—my uncle."

"Mr. Davidson?"

"Yes; Uncle Henry. He manages things until I'm thirty. All I get—or did get—was the income."

Rosalind nodded.

"Well, I used to play cards a good bit. I was always losing, somehow. I was always drawing in advance on Uncle Henry. I suppose you can understand how that was."

"Oh, thoroughly!"

"Of course, he didn't fancy that much. He said I was getting into disastrous habits, and—I guess he was right. He wanted me to stop playing cards for money."

"Was it bridge?"

"That was it—bridge."

"It's rather fascinating," she commented.

"I thought so—once," he said gloomily. "Well, Uncle Henry had some friends up from the city, and we had a pretty heavy game one night. There was a Mr. Morton there."

"I know. Go ahead; it's becoming exciting."

"Well, Morton cleaned me; that's all. Cleaned me for a year's income. Of course, I hadn't saved anything before that; in fact, I was overdrawn. So that settled it."

He stared disconsolately at the river.

"And Mr. Davidson?" she suggested.

"Uncle Henry? Well, he hit the ceiling, if you know what that means."

"I have a notion. He was very angry?"

"He said he wouldn't stand for any more of it. He wouldn't advance me another cent until it was due. That meant a year, you see. I couldn't live on nothing for a year."

"I should say not!"

"So when I saw I had to go to work, he offered to get me a job. He—he wrote a letter to Hastings & Hatch, in New York, and they took me in. I've been there ever since."

"Wasn't it very hard—at first?"

"Why, it was luck—I mean, I liked it!"

"How fortunate!"

"Yes," he went on; "I got to like it right away. I really didn't want to come back at all, only Uncle Henry insisted. He telegraphed the firm. I tried to get out of it, but they made me come."

"I'm sure you've earned a rest," declared Rosalind, nodding positively. "Your uncle thinks you are doing so splendidly. I know that he will be very glad to see you."

"You don't mean to say—he's here!"

There was something very much like terror in his wide eyes.

"Oh, no; he's on his way West. What I meant was, he'll return before you go back to the city. You are to stay in charge until he gets here."

"I don't see how I can. Honestly, I don't see how. I've got to get back to work—soon."

"You are a very unaccountable person, Mr. Kellogg," commented Rosalind. "I never knew anybody who underwent such a change of heart in such a short time. Do you mean to tell me that it doesn't make you glad just to be here?"

He surveyed the river, the islands, and the passing craft. Then he shook his head.

"Perhaps I know the reason," she suggested.

He looked at her suspiciously.

"Perhaps it is that you are not anxious to meet Mr. Morton again."

"Is *he* here?"

"He is one of the guests at our island."

Kellogg lifted his ungraceful bulk abruptly from his chair and walked to the rail, where he stood for a moment gazing down at the water.

"I beg your pardon," he said, turning. "I—I didn't intend to be rude. But it was a sort of surprise, you know."

"I didn't know there had been a quarrel."

"Oh, no; not a quarrel exactly. But—"

"You are afraid it may be embarrassing."

"That's it—embarrassing."

"But your uncle seems to have no feeling against him, Mr. Kellogg."

"I know; I understand. But that's different. He didn't lose a year's income."

"Of course, we could have the yacht leave you at your own place," went on Rosalind, "if you positively insist on avoiding Mr. Morton. But, as I said, there are only the servants there."

"I wouldn't go there for the world!" he exclaimed hastily. "That is—not now."

"Then, of course, you will stay with us."

"I might go to a hotel; yes, I think I'd better."

"But there is none within several miles of your island. How could you look after things so far away?"

"That's so; I'd forgotten."

His old uneasiness had returned. Rosalind was again in perplexity. She considered Billy Kellogg as not only unaccountable, but colorless.

She was rather glad he had lost a year's income, if this was his spiritless type. An hour before she had been anticipating a welcome accession to the Witherbee house-party—welcome because she felt quite sure that no young man could fail to be an improvement

upon Mr. Morton, Reggy, Fortescue Jones, and the Perkins boy. Now she was rapidly reaching the conclusion that Billy Kellogg was even worse than any of them, and it was peculiarly a shock because it so wholly reversed her anticipations.

"You won't be paired off with Mr. Morton, at any rate," she told him consolingly. "There are lots of others. Polly Dawson, for instance; she knows you, I understand."

"Er—she is there?"

"Yes, indeed," and then Rosalind enumerated the other guests.

He shook his head as she named each person, and then returned to Polly Dawson.

"That's another surprise," he confessed.

"Not unpleasant, I hope?"

"Oh, no; not at all. I assure you I didn't mean that. Only—well, it's a surprise."

"Polly is really a very nice girl. And I've heard her speak of you so often."

"Er—have you? That's good of her, I'm sure."

After this he fell into a period of silence, from which all the arts of Rosalind Chalmers were unable to extricate him, save for fitful and brief intervals. Ordinarily, she would not have wasted her time upon such a dull and diffident young man; she would have taken his manner as an affront to her natural claims upon masculine attention.

But in this instance Rosalind's curiosity was piqued. She could not reconcile him with his reputation. If ever a devil-may-care spirit lurked in this beefy youth, something supernatural had exorcised it.

"Your island," she said, pointing.

"Looks all right," he commented, after a moment of staring.

"You don't seem particularly glad to see it."

He merely shrugged.

"Your uncle's yacht went to Kingston, I believe, to obtain some supplies."

"That's good."

"That's why Mr. Witherbee sent his own boat."

"Mighty kind of him, I'm sure."

Rosalind sighed. By all odds, this was the most difficult young man of her experience. She was glad that the voyage would terminate speedily.

A knot of persons was standing on the Witherbee wharf, awaiting the arrival of the big power-launch.

"There are Mrs. Witherbee and Gertrude and some of the others," said Rosalind, her eyes busy. "I don't see Mr. Morton; I imagine you won't mind that, however. But—yes, Polly's there."

"I—I don't see her," declared Kellogg. "Where?"

"In blue, the third from the left."

"Oh, yes; now I see."

He studied the short, plump figure of Polly Dawson with absorbed interest as the boat neared the wharf. There was a hunted expression in his eyes; his fingers twitched.

Mrs. Witherbee welcomed the new guest effusively.

"We've heard so much about you, Mr. Kellogg, that it really seems as if we knew you. But you left before we came up for the season. We're going to try to make up for it."

"That's awfully good of you," stammered the prodigal.

"My daughter, Gertrude."

He shook hands and bowed.

"Miss Winter."

He repeated the same perfunctory ceremony, but his glance was wandering restlessly.

"Mr. Jones, Mr. Perkins, and my son, Tom."

Kellogg responded mechanically to the greetings. Rosalind, following the line of his glance, saw that it was encompassed the figure of Polly Dawson. And in Polly's eyes, which were staring at the new guest, was an expression that completely baffled her.

"Oh, Polly, where are you?" called Mrs. Witherbee. "I believe you've met Mr. Kellogg, haven't you?"

Polly stepped forward and extended her hand. Rosalind watched the meeting narrowly. She sensed a situation that she did not understand—but she proposed to find out.

"Hello—Billy," said Polly in a queer voice.

"How do do—Polly?"

There was the same hesitation in Kellogg's tone.

"You're looking very well," she murmured.

"Feeling fine, thanks," he returned awkwardly.

Rosalind believed she was beginning to see a light. Here were the surface indications of heart-trouble, either on one side or the other, possibly on both. Yet on the many occasions that Polly had spoken of Kellogg, never once, either in word or manner, had she betrayed the existence of an affair of sentiment.

"Polly is deeper than she seems," Rosalind told herself.

It was Mrs. Witherbee who broke the tension.

"You must come straight up to the house and meet the others," she commanded. "We've all been expecting you, and we're delighted to have you. I told your uncle that we'd probably keep you here most of the time, unless it's absolutely necessary for you to stay at your own place."

"It isn't," he said quickly.

"I knew it wasn't," declared the hostess with emphasis. "I told Mr. Davidson the servants could do without you. So you may as well have a good time with us. Come along."

She linked an arm within that of the stammering guest and led him toward the house. Some of the others followed.

Polly lingered on the wharf, watching. So did Rosalind. When the procession had passed from ear-shot, the two women looked at each other.

"I had no idea, of course," said Rosalind, "that there had been—well, that anything had happened between you two."

Polly stared and was silent for half a minute.

"Nothing ever did happen between Billy and me," she answered slowly.

"But—"

"Where did you find him?" demanded Polly.

"At Clayton, of course. He came aboard while I was shopping. One of the men met him at the train and brought down his grips."

Polly's brow was furrowed deeply.

"I cannot understand it," she muttered. "It's—it's beyond belief."

"What?"

"His coming here."

Polly pointed at the retreating figures.

"Mr. Kellogg?"

"Kellogg? That's not Billy Kellogg!"

"Not Billy Kellogg?" echoed Rosalind. "Why, Polly!"

"That man is *not* Billy Kellogg," repeated Polly, shaking her head.

"Then—then who is he?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHO? WHAT? WHY? WHERE?

"**B**UT, Polly, it's inconceivable!"

Rosalind was preyed upon by confused emotions. She was mystified, shocked, startled, apprehensive, even angry. Dominant was the sensation that this chunky, colorless young man had played a hoax upon her.

"It's true," affirmed Polly stubbornly. "I surely know Billy Kellogg when I see him."

"Of course! But what does it mean?"

Polly made a helpless gesture.

"He came aboard as Mr. Kellogg," said Rosalind, talking as if in self-justification. "He pretended to be Mr. Kellogg. He knew all about having been sent for by his uncle. Of course, he did act strangely. But he knew Mr. Morton; he even knew you!"

"You're sure?"

"Well," admitted Rosalind, on reflecting, "now that I think of it, in your case, I had to point you out on the wharf. But he said he recognized you. And you called him Billy!"

"I didn't want to make a scene," said Polly. "I knew there was something wrong, of course. So I just pretended—thought I'd wait till I got my bearings."

"But who *can* he be?"

"I tell you, Rosalind, I don't know. I never saw the man before."

"But he's pretending to be Mr. Kellogg—if he isn't!"

"Evidently. Oh, dear! It's beyond me."

"It has something to do with these burglaries," declared Rosalind.

"I suppose so. It's awful!"

"He's probably a thief."

"Very likely."

"Yet you've recognized him—or pretended to! Do you realize what you've done, Polly Dawson?"

"He called me Polly," she answered defensively.

"And just because a stranger calls you Polly, is he to be turned loose upon your friends?"

"I didn't bring him here. I hope you're not blaming *me*, Rosalind!"

"No-o; of course I didn't mean that. But how was I to know he wasn't Billy Kellogg?"

"I don't suppose you could tell," admitted Polly. "Is—is he nice?"

"He is the stupidest and most hopeless creature I ever talked to!"

Polly sighed.

"You must go to him and demand an explanation," added Rosalind.

"I? Why, Rosalind, that's impossible! I don't even know the man!"

Rosalind regarded the plump, young person with severity.

"But *you* have given him the very last word in introductions!" she exclaimed. "You pretended you knew him. Mrs. Witherbee and everybody else have taken him at face value. You passed him without even a challenge."

Are you going to allow this stranger to live here and call you Polly? Why—why, it may make you *particeps criminis*!”

Polly's lower lip quivered.

“I—I couldn't think of anything else to do,” she faltered. “Oh, Rosalind, you must help me!”

“It looks as if we must help each other,” declared Rosalind. “We simply cannot allow this man to impose upon the Witherbees.”

Polly was on the brink of tears. She was thoroughly frightened. Not until Rosalind, in self-defense, had placed the burden upon her did she realize the enormity involved in her recognition of the stranger. It was a mere procrastination, of course, due to bewilderment; but it had served as an authoritative introduction for the impostor.

“Mr. Morton!” exclaimed Polly suddenly.

“Well?”

“But they'll meet—don't you see? And they're supposed to know each other!”

“True,” murmured Rosalind. “I'd forgotten that. Well, we've got to face it. Let's go and see what has happened.”

Polly shrank back.

“You go,” she begged.

“We'll go together,” said Rosalind firmly. “We must see it through.”

“But—”

“And listen! Not a word of explanation, unless something has already happened. Understand? No! Not a word! Go on calling him Billy. Keep it up until we find out something.”

“I—I can't,” wailed Polly.

“Nonsense!” Rosalind was losing patience. “Didn't I travel all the way down from Clayton with him, talking to him just if he were really Mr. Kellogg? It's a pity if you can't help a little—after deliberately turning him loose on this island.”

“Why not ex—expose him?”

“Not yet! We must find out some things first. We must know what it

all means. Come, now! For Heaven's sake, brace up, Polly! Nobody has been murdered yet.”

“I'm afraid!”

“Then let me take the responsibility,” declared Rosalind in a disgusted tone. “Only you've simply got to play your part—now that you've started it.”

She seized the trembling Polly by the arm and started her at a rapid pace toward the house. Rosalind was bewildered not less than her companion, but she betrayed the fact by no outward sign. Even in the face of possible disaster, resolution did not desert her. Besides, her anger was still hot at the deception practised by the pudgy young man who was now so inadvertently a guest of the island.

Polly's efforts to hang back were ineffectual. There was grim energy in Rosalind's grip, so that the unwilling young woman found herself propelled forward, despite her vanished courage.

The Kellogg impostor was the center of a group on the porch. As they joined it, Mr. Morton approached from the other direction. The stout visitor was mopping his brow assiduously and answering questions in monosyllables. He seemed unable to decide between his feet, for he stood first upon one, then upon the other, but never upon both at the same time.

As Rosalind and Polly appeared, he observed them with an alarmed and imploring glance. Polly's eyes did not meet his, but the cool stare of her companion never wincing.

“Here's Mr. Morton now!” exclaimed Mrs. Witherbee. “Of course, you know each other. Oh, Mr. Morton! Mr. Kellogg is here!”

Morton glanced casually over the head of the Perkins boy and studied the newcomer for a brief instant.

“By Jove, Kellogg, but I'm glad to see you!” he drawled.

The words were accompanied by the thrusting forth of a long arm, the hand attached to which seized the limp fingers of Kellogg. That young man per-

mitted his jaw to drop an inch, where it hung, irresolute.

"Why—hello, Morton," he murmured.

"Glad you've joined us, I'm sure," said the Englishman unemotionally. "Awfully glad. How's New York?"

"F-fine!"

"And business?"

"Oh—er—excellent."

Rosalind was too deeply engrossed in the exchange of greetings to notice that Polly's hand was clasping her own with desperate energy. The haughty lady whom everybody wished to marry was dumfounded.

Morton had accepted the stranger! Morton—who knew as well as Polly that this was not the Billy Kellogg from whom he had won a year's income!

What *did* it mean?

"Mr. Kellogg is up to take charge of his uncle's place while Mr. Davidson is away," explained Mrs. Witherbee, breathing a soft sigh of gratification at the absence of animosity between these knights of the gaming-table.

Perspiration streamed down the cheeks of the stout young man. He stared at Morton with the fascination of a bird looking upon the mythically hypnotic serpent. His glance finally wavered and met that of Rosalind. She saw the muscles of his jaw tighten, and watched him while he breathed deeply.

"Oh, I say!" he began. "Something's wrong. I—"

Rosalind's head was moving slowly from side to side, and her glare was truly ferocious. The young man stopped. Then all traces of resolution wilted.

"Wrong?" asked Mrs. Witherbee anxiously.

"Why—er—you see—"

He gulped and looked again at Rosalind. Her head was still moving, and her lips were grim.

"What I meant was, Uncle Henry said there was something wrong at the

island, and—well, you see, he wanted me to look out for it."

"What's wrong?" demanded the voice of Reginald Williams.

Unanimous dismay overspread the faces of the group. They remembered Reggy's heart!

"Nothing at all," said Rosalind coolly, as she stabbed the stout young man with a warning glance. "What Mr. Kellogg meant was that his uncle is engaged in some agricultural experiments, and that when he was called away it was necessary to have somebody there to look after them. So Mr. Kellogg came up."

It was a shot in the air, but Rosalind felt that agriculture was safe and non-exciting. The members of the group breathed again and looked at her in admiration. The stranger was also staring at her without comprehension.

"Agricultural experiments!" snorted Reggy.

"Certainly," said Rosalind freezingly. "Exactly that. He is experimenting with a new kind of cauliflower. It's very delicate, and it has to be looked after whenever there is the least danger of frost. That's why he wanted—burlap. Isn't it, Mr. Kellogg?"

"Why—yes," the fat youth assented faintly.

Once more Rosalind received a tribute from grateful eyes, but this time they contained astonishment as well as gratitude. She accepted the homage complacently. The rôle for which she had cast Reggy Williams was still his.

"After tea," suggested Mrs. Witherbee, "if it's really necessary, you can have the launch and go over to look after the cauliflower."

"It's not necessary!" exclaimed Kellogg hastily. "It's not a bit chilly this afternoon—not a bit."

Rosalind gently detached Polly from the circle and led her along the porch.

"Get that man aside," she ordered, "and pump him."

Polly quailed.

"You must! We've simply got to find out something about him. And you're the only one to do it; you're supposed to know him."

"But—did you see Mr. Morton? He recognized him."

"He pretended to," declared Rosalind. "And that's one of the things I want to know something about. That makes two people who have pretended to know him. Are you quite sure, Polly, that you're not mistaken?"

"Rosalind!"

"Oh, well, I suppose you're not. At any rate, it's your business to do some investigating."

"But I don't know what to ask."

"Heavens, Polly! There are a lot of things to find out. Who is he? What is he here for? Why did he pretend to know you? Why did Mr. Morton pretend to know him? Where is Billy Kellogg? How did a telegram to Kellogg fall into his hands? Why, he may have murdered Kellogg!"

Polly shrieked faintly.

"Of course I don't believe he did," added Rosalind contemptuously. "That man, whoever he is, wouldn't murder a rabbit. But there's something exceedingly strange about the whole affair, and it is our business to find out what it means. Go and get him!"

"But what shall I say?" wailed Polly.

Rosalind sighed hopelessly.

"Go and ask him anything," she said. "Take him down to the summer-house to see the river—anything, I tell you! And then pump—pump—*pump!*"

Polly Dawson shivered, but obeyed. When it amounted to a clash of wills, Rosalind was irresistible.

The latter lady watched the couple depart in the direction of the summer-house and smiled resignedly. Polly was so literal! Had it been her own task, Rosalind would have taken him to the first available place—anywhere that was beyond ear-shot of the others. But Polly needed a sailing-chart and a compass.

Rosalind managed a meeting with Mr. Morton, but it resulted in no information, because she did not choose to acquaint that gentleman with the fact that she knew the Kellogg to be spurious. And Morton volunteered nothing. So far as the surface of him went, the meeting had not occasioned even a ripple.

It was half an hour later when Polly reappeared and beckoned Rosalind to a corner of the porch.

"He's—he's not Billy Kellogg!" whispered Polly triumphantly.

Rosalind regarded her with a mingling of patience and pity.

"Is *that* all you learned?" she asked.

"He admitted it!"

"Of course he did. What of that? You knew it, anyhow, didn't you?"

"Ye-es—but he confessed."

"And what else did he confess?"

"Nothing."

An exasperated gasp was Rosalind's only comment.

"He—he said he couldn't explain," added Polly in an agitated voice. "And he seemed so nervous about it that I felt sorry for him. Truly I did, Rosalind."

"I haven't the least doubt," icily. "Tell me exactly what you said."

"He said it first. He said that he knew that I knew that he wasn't Billy Kellogg, and I admitted that I did know it, and that I thought that he knew I knew it. And then before I could say anything, he said that he couldn't explain, and he hoped I would not say anything—particularly to you. He—he seemed to be afraid of you, Rosalind. And, of course, after he said he couldn't explain, I couldn't very well ask him. Now, could I?"

"Of course not," said Rosalind in a withering voice.

"And he doesn't look like a murderer either, Rosalind; so I didn't ask him about that. He said he'd explain as soon as he could, and he wanted to know what Mr. Morton thought about him. I told him I thought Mr. Morton

probably thought what you did. Was that right?"

"I am not accountable for Mr. Morton's thoughts."

"At any rate, I'm sure he won't do any harm, Rosalind—he seems so dreadfully embarrassed."

"And after talking to him for half an hour, you haven't the least idea who he is or why he came here?" Rosalind demanded.

"I—I'm afraid not."

Rosalind threw her arms wide in a gesture of hopelessness.

"What do you propose to do about this—impostor?" she demanded. "You are the person chiefly responsible. You permitted Mrs. Witherbee to receive him."

"Why don't *you* expose him?" asked Polly meekly.

Rosalind ignored the inquiry.

"Besides," added Polly, "he says he will go away to-morrow."

"He will *not*!" exclaimed Rosalind.

"You mean—"

"I mean that he will not leave this island until we know something about him if I have to sit up by myself and watch him."

Polly uttered an exclamation of awe.

"The man's an impostor—probably a thief," added Rosalind. "Do you suppose I shall permit him to go as he came? I think *not*!"

"You think we ought to tell the others?"

"Not yet. There is only one thing to do for the present—watch. That will be your business and mine. We must see to it that this man is not allowed to go away until everything is explained. Meanwhile, we will send for the person who is evidently the principal one to be concerned—Mr. Davidson."

"And wait?"

"Certainly. It cannot be very long. I shall telegraph to Mr. Davidson this evening; right away, in fact. It will not be difficult to reach him on the train. And we will keep this man here until Mr. Davidson returns."

"Suppose he will not stay, Rosalind?" ventured Polly timidly.

"Leave that to me. He'll stay!"

CHAPTER XIX.

STUNG!

ROSALIND not only wired to Mr. Davidson but, as an afterthought, she sent a message to Hastings & Hatch. The answer to the latter came promptly the following forenoon.

It did not serve to restore her equanimity. It described William Kissam Kellogg minutely, as Rosalind had requested, and the description was a photographic likeness of the young man who had confessed to Polly that he was no such person.

"Nothing to do but wait for Mr. Davidson," said Rosalind.

She spent some of the time, when it was not devoted to standing watch upon the stranger, in writing. After the call of the customs agents at Witherbee's Island, Rosalind had begun the preparation of a memorandum. It had already reached a length of several pages; there were daily additions. Also, there were classifications, thus:

What I Really Did.

What They Think I Did.

What I Know about Certain Things and Persons.

What I Must Find out about Them.

What Must Never Be Found out about Me.

Things That I Have Said (for reference in connection with other things I may have to say before this is over).

Suspicious That I Have.

Under the last head there was much writing, for Rosalind's mind was as crowded with suspicions as that of a crowned head is thronged with troubles. It was not strange of course, that a large part of the memorandum dealt with the boatman. At every turn and corner of it his name and his deeds intruded.

But there were some things that Rosalind, even in the privacy of her diary, would not suffer herself to com-

mit to plain English. These were represented by a cipher code, the key to which lay only in her memory.

For instance, a Maltese cross represented her experience in the tree; a star the shower-bath that came from the boatman's bucket, an asterisk the dance at the hotel where she found herself in the arms of Sam. All this was by way of mitigating the disaster that would befall if her memorandum chanced to come to the eyes of another.

The task of keeping watch upon the strange young man was more tedious than difficult. Most of the time he sat on the porch staring at the lawn with inconsolable eyes. He made not the slightest attempt to escape; rather, he appeared to be in a sort of stupor. Polly felt sorry for him; Rosalind had only contempt.

A day passed thus and a second began with the young man still sitting and staring. Even Mrs. Witherbee granted that he was an unhappy acquisition, while everybody was unanimous in agreeing that work had produced an appalling effect upon Kellogg.

It was mid-morning when Rosalind, unable longer to endure the sight—she classified him as a vegetable—left Polly on guard and betook herself to the river. One thing she wanted was her bracelet. Of the boatman she had seen nothing; he had made no effort to restore her property.

With an intent that was really subconscious, she rowed one of the light skiffs in the direction of his island. There was also something mechanical rather than deliberate in the act of her landing there, making fast her boat, and ascending the path that led to his shack. Only the sound of voices awakened her from a day-dream.

She halted and listened. One of the voices was unmistakably that of Sam. The other, subdued and indifferent in tone, she finally identified as that of Mr. Morton.

Now all of her senses were alert and tingling. Perhaps it was a chance meeting; perhaps a plot; perhaps—

But it might be any one of so many things that it was not worth while to speculate. It was entirely a matter for observation.

Rosalind advanced cautiously, taking care that no stick snapped or stone rolled underfoot, and keeping herself screened behind the small trees and bushes that sheltered the path. Presently she sighted them. The spectacle was one that surprised her.

Sam and the Englishman were seated on the ground, facing each other. Between them lay a folded blanket. The boatman was shuffling a pack of cards.

"What I can't make out," Sam was saying, "is the luck of it—you walking right into my parlor, just as the fly went calling on the spider, and without an invitation at that. I'd been trying to think up a scheme to get you here, and, by jingo! you save me the trouble."

"Um—ah—just rowing about a bit, you know. Exercise and that sort of thing. Saw your island, and came ashore to have a look."

"And you didn't know it was my hangout, eh?"

The boatman was watching the Englishman closely.

"'Pon my word, no! Awfully sorry I've intruded."

"Intruded! Man alive, you're as welcome as good news! Sit still; you positively mustn't be going yet. I insist. I hear you're something of a card-player. That's why—Confound that pack! My fingers are like thumbs lately."

The boatman gathered up the scattered pack and resumed his shuffling.

"You are about to make the acquaintance," he said, "of that certain branch of the great American sport known as freeze-out. You have ten chips; I have ten. Your chips are worth a thousand each; you'll have to take my word for it that mine are worth the same. The limit is anything you have in sight."

Morton yawned.

"Really," he drawled, "I'm not interested, you know."

"You will be," the boatman reassured him. "It's going to be highly interesting. Will you cut?"

"Rather, I think I'll say good day," and Morton made as if to rise.

Then Rosalind noticed that a pistol lay at the boatman's side and that his hand sought it. Morton observed the movement, too, for with a bored sigh he settled back on his crossed legs.

"I'll cut," he said.

The boatman dealt and picked up his hand. For a few seconds his antagonist seemed not to know the purpose of the five cards that lay, face downward, before him; then he lifted them languidly.

"I say," he yawned, "is a pair any good in this game?"

"Not too good," answered the boatman cheerfully. "How many?"

Morton took three, while Sam contented himself with one.

The Englishman tossed a chip into the center of the blanket, the boatman two.

"Er—what should I do now?" inquired the prisoner listlessly.

"Quit, call, or raise—anything you please."

"To call is—er—to equal the amount of your stake?"

"You've got the idea."

Morton added a chip to the pot and laid a pair of eights on the blanket. The boatman displayed tens up and nonchalantly raked four chips toward himself.

"Your deal," he said, tossing the cards across.

Rosalind frowned as she stared at the Englishman.

"I am afraid he is a fool, after all," she thought. "Why didn't he—"

The Englishman was dealing abstractedly. He had to be reminded to look at his own hand.

Sam drew three cards, Morton three. This time three of the Englishman's chips crossed the blanket to the other side. He showed not even a pair.

"It's plain robbery," whispered Rosalind to herself. "The man doesn't know the first thing about poker. Can they really be serious?"

A second look at the boatman's pistol reminded her that they probably were.

For five minutes the game progressed. Twice, by an accident of fate, the Englishman gathered the pot, but for the most part his own pile was receding chip by chip. Even in his winning moments he seemed bored almost to the point of somnolence. The boatman alternately grinned and whistled.

"I'll just tap you for what you've got," Sam said after examining his final draw. "Two checks, I believe."

"This is a deuced stupid game, you know," remarked Morton as he pushed the last of his stack to the center.

"Doesn't strike you quite so favorably as bridge, eh?"

"Rather—not."

"Do you happen to have anything as good as three of a kind?"

Morton looked down at his cards as if he had just discovered them.

"Er—what would you make of them?" he asked, displaying them.

Rosalind gasped. She could see the hand from where she stood. It contained not even a pair!

"I'd make a resolution to quit," advised the boatman as he took the last of the chips. "This freezes you."

"Can't say I think much of your American game," and Morton yawned again prodigiously. "Ah—how much?"

"You've lost ten thousand, my friend."

"Really, now?"

"Honest and truly."

The boatman's hand crept toward his revolver.

With a listless shrug Morton began feeling in an inner pocket. Presently he drew forth a wallet.

"The idiot!" fumed Rosalind. "He's been swindled!"

A moment's search within the folds

of the leather resulted in the appearance of an oblong slip of paper. Glancing casually at it, Morton handed it to the boatman. The latter examined it closely, then looked up with a smile.

"I—er—think you'll find it good," drawled Morton.

"I'll take a chance," said Sam as he thrust the paper into the pocket of his shirt. "Mighty nice of you to carry this around with you. But let me give you a chunk of advice. Next time you trim a guy at bridge, either keep your mouth shut about it or don't carry the stuff around with you. You are liable to tempt some of us poker-kings."

"Ah—thanks, by Jove! Not a bad idea, that. You'll not be wanting me now, I take it?"

"School's out."

The boatman rose to his feet.

The placidity of Morton was undisturbed as he stood and flected a few patches of dust from his trousers.

"I'll be going, if you don't mind," he remarked. "My boat's at the other end of the island."

Although the affair was none of hers, Rosalind found herself angry. If there was one thing that annoyed her beyond endurance, it was sheer stupidity. She believed she had just witnessed the apotheosis of it.

Yet something struck her oddly as the Englishman turned and walked away. She was quite sure that she heard him chuckle. The boatman must have heard the same thing, for he stared after Morton curiously.

"A bad check, I'll wager," whispered Rosalind to herself. "But where was the sense in the whole affair, anyhow? Never mind; it's not my business. But I want my bracelet."

She stepped from her concealment, and an instant later the boatman turned at the sound of her footsteps.

"Hello!" he said cordially. "You just missed the performance."

"My bracelet, please," was Rosalind's only remark.

"Why, I'd clean forgotten it, ma'am."

"You haven't—lost it?"

"No fear; it's safe."

He turned and entered the cabin, appearing a moment later with the golden circlet lying in his palm. Rosalind seized it with more joy than dignity. The touch of it, as she snapped it about her arm, was exhilarating. Her eyes shone with the light of triumph.

The boatman watched the expressive pantomime with evident approval.

"You're rather lucky to get it, in a way," he said. "I've just been taking a chance at freeze-out, and if I'd lost I guess it would have been up to me to fork over the bracelet as part payment."

Rosalind made no pretense of being startled at the idea. She knew he was capable of no such infamy, no matter what he might be.

"I saw what happened," she remarked.

"Oh, did you?"

"I saw you steal ten thousand dollars."

The boatman studied her quizzically.

"And never made a move to stop me," he commented.

She winced, but decided to ignore the implication.

"I didn't steal it, ma'am," he added. "Poker's a perfectly fair game. I didn't stack the cards; I didn't shove a cold deck at him."

"Fair! When he didn't know the first principles of it?"

"He certainly didn't play as if he did," admitted Sam. "But if he didn't know poker, he had no business to sit in the game."

"Not with a gun at his head?"

"Hum! I'd forgotten the gun. I suppose that did have something to do with it. It wasn't loaded, though."

"It was no better than stealing. It was stealing."

"Funny thing about it," mused the boatman, as if he did not hear her, "but he didn't seem to care much, one

way or the other. Why, he yawned in my face, ma'am."

The creature baffled her completely.

"Have you no compunctions whatever about the manner in which you took his money?" she asked curiously.

"Compunctions — about him? I'm afraid not. He stole it in the first place, didn't he?"

"He won it—fairly!" exclaimed Rosalind. "You knew he had it, and you've been plotting and planning to get it for days and days."

"Maybe," he admitted.

"I hope the check he gave you is bad," she added viciously.

"That would be a horse on me; wouldn't it, ma'am? But that's a chance that folks like you and me have to run. Still, I heard he stole it, or what amounts to the same thing."

"I tell you he didn't!"

"You seem mighty sure about that. How do you know, ma'am?"

"Because Mr. Kellogg told me so."

"Kellogg?"

"Yes; he's here."

The boatman eyed her for several seconds.

"He is staying at Mr. Witherbee's," she added.

Of course, Rosalind knew that this was a fib; but somebody who called himself Kellogg was staying there, at any rate, and she saw no need of explaining to Sam.

"So Kellogg's here, is he?" he remarked. "I suppose he came back to have another try at the Englishman. That 'll be hard luck for Kellogg, because I think his lordship is about cleaned, ma'am."

"He came for no such purpose," declared Rosalind, half wondering why she was hastening to the defense of an impostor. "Mr. Kellogg has—reformed."

"Reformed? Was he — Hum! Well—was he one of us?"

Rosalind's cheeks flamed.

"He was a good-for-nothing, idle gambler!" she exclaimed.

"Oh!" said the boatman in a relieved tone. "He's turned over a new leaf, eh?"

"He's very much engrossed in his new work."

"What's he doing here, then?"

"His uncle sent for him."

Again the boatman appeared to reflect.

"What for?" he asked.

"To look after his island while he is away. Mr. Davidson has gone to Denver. And Mr. Kellogg is going to try to put an end to all these burglaries. So there's a warning for you."

He pondered the warning and wrinkled his forehead.

"Customs officers still hanging around?" he asked.

"I am told they are."

"And that Canadian spy-chaser—is he still on the job?"

"I saw the launch again yesterday."

"Is Davidson's police patrol cruising, too?"

"Of course. And they've put on another boat."

Rosalind noted with satisfaction that he was showing traces of worry.

"I expect that's going to make things pretty warm," he observed.

"Dangerous!" she supplemented.

"You'd advise flitting, then, ma'am?"

"Beyond all question. And—well, it's only because of the bracelet that I give you this warning."

"It's certainly kind of you—mighty kind."

Rosalind felt that the sword no longer dangled over her head by a single hair.

"You're a good, square pal to tip me off," he went on. "I guess you're dead right about it. The jig's up for us."

"Yes, ma'am. We'd better blow."

"We!"

"We'll be starting in a few minutes. It never pays to stick around after the last hand's played."

Rosalind was tongue-tied with astonishment.

CHAPTER XX.

"GOOD WORK, PAL!"

"YOU see," Sam went on, seemingly unaware of her consternation, "it's foolish to take any more chances than are absolutely necessary. Now that we've got a fairly good stake, it would be silly to wait. We'll run over to the American side somewhere, and once we get ashore there's small chance of getting pinched."

"Are you utterly mad?" asked Rosalind, abruptly finding her voice.

"Mad? I should say not, ma'am. Just cautious—that's all. I'd be mad if I stayed."

"But you are saying that I—"

"That you're going with me. Certainly. Why not?"

Rosalind was not frightened, yet something in his tone chilled her. She examined his face with searching eyes. He seemed to be quite composed; there was no trace of wildness in his eyes, no betrayal of mental agitation in his speech. Were it not for his astounding words, she would have considered him entirely normal. She decided to laugh, but the attempt was poor. His was infinitely more successful.

"It may be a little sudden, ma'am," he admitted; "but it seems a case for quick action. I'm sorry we won't even be able to stop at Witherbee's for your trunks."

She decided to try a reasonable tone.

"Think what you are saying," she advised, controlling her voice. "It is quite impossible—this thing you propose. But, of course, you're not serious."

"Never more serious in my life."

The look in his eyes gave her a twinge of alarm.

"But don't you see—Sam—"

"That's the first time you've called me by name," he interrupted with a bow. "Thanks, partner."

"But don't you see there is no reason whatever for me to go."

Rosalind was trying to talk to him as if he were a petulant child to be placated, or a lunatic to be argued with until help arrived.

"There's every reason," he answered. "Pals should stick together."

"But you know—seriously—that I am not your—pal!"

The vulgar word passed her lips reluctantly.

"But you are, ma'am; the best I ever had. I guess I could name a dozen instances of it. Want me to go over them? First, there's—"

"You need not. It's too absurd. I shall go at once."

"Not till I go," he told her firmly. "As I was going to say when you interrupted me, ma'am, we'll make a break for the American shore, and as soon as we can get a license and a justice of the peace or minister, why—"

"Stop!"

"We'll get married."

Rosalind turned pale. Truly she was dealing with a madman on this lonely little island!

"Married!"

"Why, certainly! What else? You don't suppose I'm going to lose a pal like you?"

The boatman was so calm that his manner utterly disconcerted her. A rational exterior, she reflected, often cloaked the most dangerous forms of insanity.

"But I have no intention of marrying—anybody."

"That's been the trouble all along," he assured her. "You've had so many offers that you don't take them seriously any longer. But this is different. This isn't an offer, ma'am; it's just a plain announcement of what's going to happen. We're going to be married."

She glanced swiftly through the trees in the direction of the river. There was not a boat within hailing distance.

"It's this way," he went on easily.

"You've helped me out of a few tight places. I've helped you once, at least. We're a great team, and there's nothing like teamwork in our business. I don't mind saying I'm strong for you. You have got good nerve; when you make up your mind to anything, you're apt to get it.

"You and I can go a long way together. I'll admit we may quarrel some, but that 'll be your fault. You've got a hair-trigger tongue, ma'am. But I won't mind that; I'm getting used to it. The point is, when we get working together we're able to deliver the goods.

"You wouldn't expect me to lose a good pal, would you? Of course not. And I can't see myself doing it, either. It's true that the jig is up here. But it's a wide, wide world, pal. Shall we be going?"

"Do you suppose for one instant," said Rosalind, trying to hide the real terror in her voice, "that I am going to marry—you?"

"I'm sure of it," he said confidently. "Why not, ma'am? We won't starve—and I say that without the least idea of tapping your bank-roll. You can keep it soaked away, if you want you. I've got a nice little stake now." He touched the pocket where Morton's check reposed.

"That 'll last us a good while," he continued, "and it's a sure thing we'll turn off some kind of a job before that's gone. Why, just think! With my experience and your social drag—"

"Stop!"

There was absolute desperation in her voice.

"Not much time to lose," he advised, glancing at a nicked watch. "No telling but that Englishman 'll be stirring up some sort of trouble for us."

Wrath triumphed at last despite Rosalind's efforts to be self-contained.

"You common thief!" she cried, stamping her foot and glaring. "How dare you insult me so? You burglar! You blackmailer! You—"

"Spy and smuggler," he supplied. "May as well get the whole list out of your system, ma'am. I don't mind; I keep my temper better than you do.

"But don't forget that I'm talking facts, while you're just barking at the moon. I hate to disappoint you, in one way; but your scalping days are over, ma'am. You've had your last proposal. I don't doubt you've turned down a lot of pretty good scouts, but you won't turn down any more. That's a cinch, as far as I can see now.

"You had your last proposal—unless there's been one since—when the Englishman got so enthusiastic over you. I heard it, you know. You threw him rather hard. You did the same for Reggy, less than half an hour before. And I understand there's been a long string of them. Well, you're at the end of the string."

He grinned complacently.

"You needn't shout," he added. "You're not getting a chance to turn me down. This is no proposal, ma'am. This is what you might call an order, if I have to speak plain. It don't require any answer. It's not up to you to say yes or no; all you have to do is to come along like a good pal."

Rosalind shrank backward a step. At last she was genuinely frightened, for Sam possessed all the calm of a terrible madness.

"What a fool I'd be to let you go!" he added reflectively. "And—not to flatter myself—what a fool you'd be to miss a chance like this! We've just got to know each other's ways; we're like wheels in the same clock. I need you; you need me.

"I'll admit you don't have to earn your living. But think of the fun you miss when you don't! It gets mighty tiresome, standing on the outside and looking in. What you and I need, ma'am, is excitement—plenty of action—something to keep us on edge.

"You're what I call an emergency pal. You don't really begin to get good until you're in a scrape. It takes trouble to start you going. But when

you do get started—if you don't mind my saying it ma'am—you go to it like the cat to the canary."

She scarcely heard his last words; her mind was intent on seeking some avenue of escape. Tentatively, she edged toward the path that led to the boat-landing. But the boatman understood and shook his head.

"When we go, we go together," he assured her. "That dress you're wearing looks all right. Whatever you need in the line of clothes we can get when we hit the mainland."

"As far as I'm concerned, all I have to do is to put on my hat. And that's down in the boat, I think; if it isn't, it doesn't matter. So we'll start, I guess."

He turned toward the path and beckoned.

"I refuse to stir a foot!" exclaimed Rosalind.

She compressed her lips.

"That means carrying you, then, ma'am."

"You dare not touch me!"

"I hate to, but I'll have to, if you're not willing to walk."

"I will not go! It's—it's insanity!"

The boatman shrugged and advanced toward her. She retreated a pace.

"If you dare—"

"Will you walk, then?"

"I'll find some way—"

"Once and for all, will you walk?"

She searched his eyes for some trace of insincerity or weakness, but found none. A shudder of fear shook her. Then she rallied herself angrily.

"I shall walk," she said coldly.

He nodded contentedly and led the way toward the landing. Rosalind followed mechanically, but her brain was afire with activity. Beyond doubt, the boatman had become insane; if, indeed, he had not been so from the first.

But she realized that at times it was needful to humor an unbalanced mind. For the present, she would accompany him; but surely there would be an opportunity to escape. If she could obtain no aid from a passing boat, at

least there would be ample help when they reached the mainland.

"We'll take the old Fifty-Fifty," he remarked as he loosed the painter. "It's better than rowing. And if anything goes wrong, why, you're here to fix it. By the way, what do you want me to call you, ma'am—Rosie?"

She glared at him.

"No? Rosalind, maybe? It's a little long; but it'll do, I suppose. It's shorter than saying Miss Chalmers, anyhow. But it's not as short as pal. I rather like that, myself. But you seem to be touchy about it."

Rosalind stepped aboard the launch without answering.

She prayed that the engine might not start; but the prayer was unanswered for it purred happily at the first turn of the fly-wheel. The launch backed out into the stream. An instant later it described a half-circle, then started eastward.

"We'll hit the trail for Ogdensburg," said the boatman. "Plenty of preachers there."

"Are you aware of the fact," remarked Rosalind, with a sudden smile of triumph, "that before you drag me to a preacher you must drag me to some town clerk or other person and obtain a license?"

To her annoyance, he appeared neither surprised nor dismayed.

"It's just another step in the journey," he said carelessly. "I'll admit that this license game is sometimes a spoil-sport on romance. But you haven't got me there. You'll agree! You'll step right up to the captain's office and take your little oath without saying a word. A good pal never welches."

"I shall most certainly turn you over to the police at the first opportunity."

"No," he said confidently, with a shake of his head; "you won't do anything of the kind. Why, ma'am, you're the pal who keeps me out of the hands of the police! You're an expert at it. I'm proud of you."

"You see, if one of us got pinched, the other would have to go along, too; I'm strong for sticking together. You understand—for better or for worse, ma'am. I think that's the way they say it.

"And if they should happen to pinch you, it would be real embarrassing, I expect. They'd start finding things out, maybe; all about lots of things that have happened to you and me. My, but that would be a piece for the papers! Head-lines and pictures and artists drawing little sketches of Rosalind, the 'Regal Lady,' sitting in a tree and burgling a house and bossing a gas-engine and—"

"Stop!"

"Oh, all right; I'll stop! I expected you to get the idea. You're not much of a hand for getting laughed at, I notice. And folks might laugh if they read the papers. You've got a kind of a long name for a big-type head-line, too; some printer-chap might chop it down to Rosie in order to make it fit."

The boatman grinned and reached over to advance the spark.

Rosalind turned her back upon him—this One-Cylinder Sam who meant to marry her—and gazed despairingly across the water. By sheer perversity of fate, there was not a boat within half a mile. Ogdensburg meant a run of several hours, even at the best gait of the Fifty-Fifty. It might be dark when they arrived. She imagined the panic on Witherbee's Island when nightfall came without her.

Sam lighted his pipe and sat hunched over the tiller, smoking thoughtfully. For a quarter of an hour he appeared to pay no attention to anything save the back of Rosalind's head. Then something caused him to glance upward at the sky, then at the horizon that lay behind them. He wrinkled his forehead and put aside his pipe.

It was scarcely mid-afternoon, but daylight was failing rapidly. Rosalind herself, although wholly concerned with her absurd and perhaps danger-

ous plight, presently noticed the change in the sky. A swift survey of a great bank of black and lead-colored clouds ended with a glance at the boatman.

"Squall coming," he admitted, with a nod.

She experienced a feeling of elation. A squall might mean anything but a license and a parson. It was a storm that saved Britain from the Armada.

Sam, however, made no alteration in his course. Frequently he glanced over his shoulder, but soon this maneuver became unnecessary, for the battle-front of the squall had advanced with such appalling rapidity that it now overhung them, like some monster destroyer of the air. As yet, however, there was no breath of wind.

"You'll make an island?" Rosalind suggested.

"She'll ride it out," he said confidently. "I've been out in 'em before."

Rosalind measured the low free-board of the launch with a doubtful eye. She was still triumphant in what she felt would abruptly shatter the mad plans of the boatman, yet she was sensibly uneasy at the fairly ferocious aspect of the storm.

"Better make a landing," she warned.

"Afraid?"

She turned her back upon him.

Half a mile astern a long, white line extended itself across the river. Beyond it the boatman could not see, for all was murk and grayness and ominous opacity. Then the white line seemed to leap forward at a furious pace. The speed of the launch was as nothing to it.

Suddenly the steersman seemed to awake. He chewed his under lip anxiously as he watched the onrush of the line of foam.

"Worse than I thought," he muttered. "I'm a fool."

A quarter of a mile to his left lay an island, but he knew there was not a chance in a thousand of making the lee of it. Besides, to alter the course

meant taking the squall abeam, with a swift ending of the voyage in mid-river.

"Come aft here!" he commanded.

Rosalind turned and studied the white line. It was not more than a hundred yards distant. Without a word she obeyed him.

He motioned her to a seat beside him, and as she sat down passed an arm around her shoulders.

"Sit tight, pal," he said. "And if it gets too bad, there's a life-preserver under your feet."

The change in his tone impressed her for the moment far more than threatened perils. All the banter and sarcasm had vanished from his voice. He spoke gravely, almost grimly.

"I shall not need it," she answered. "I swim."

"We may be in a bad fix," he said, his lips close to her ear. "If it was anybody but you I wouldn't admit it. But you're game. It'll blow hard and get rough. I'm sorry—"

The remainder of the sentence she could not hear, for the white line had overtaken them. The storm-front delivered a blow like a battering-ram, a blow in which wind, hail, sea, and a stifling smother of froth seemed welded into one sinister and mighty weapon. The launch staggered, then leaped forward.

Rosalind felt a cruel beating of ice-shrapnel upon her face, her arms, her thinly clad shoulders. In an effort to give her shelter the boatman drew her head down against his flannel shirt. One hand was needed for the tiller, for the clumsy power-boat was yawing and swaying, and at every lurch struggled, as if with deliberate purpose, to offer her beam to the storm.

He steered wholly by instinct. Every landmark and island had been blotted out as if swept from the surface of the river. Even the bow of the launch was no longer visible.

The boatman sat with his feet braced against a cleat, his body swaying with the roll of the seas. He

squinted through half-closed eyes, but saw nothing save a fury of white water and driving hail. Indeed, river and air seemed to have merged into a whirling, stinging, vapory mass, in the grip of which the launch was flung onward, so that at times she seemed to fly rather than float.

Rosalind was glad to hide her face, not because she feared to look upon the fury that encompassed them, but to shield it from the bitter volleying of the hail. It seemed not to descend from sky to earth, but to travel horizontally, with the velocity and flat trajectory of a rifle-bullet.

Flying water smote her when the wind sliced the crests from waves and flung them aboard across the stern of the wallowing launch. The boatman's grip tightened. Even in the din and ferocity of the storm she found herself marveling at the power that lay in his slender but sinewy arm.

His lips were against her ear.

"All right?" he shouted. "Just nod; don't try to talk!"

She nodded.

Another minute passed. There was no slackening in the onslaught. Once the tiller was almost wrenched from Sam's hand by the impact of a sea that caught the launch a quartering blow. It was nearly disaster, but he managed to swing the stern to the wind again. Yet the blow had left its mark. There was water now above the flooring.

As it swirled about Rosalind's feet she reached forward to where a tin bucket lay. The boatman drew her back.

"No use!" he roared. "You can't bail!"

She accepted his decision without question, and again hid her face against his breast.

"Get the life-preserver!"

She heard the command but dimly, though it was shouted directly into her ear.

Rosalind shook her head. Of what

use was a thing of cork and canvas out there in the white fury?

"Get it!"

Again she shook her head. It was not merely the uselessness of the thing that caused her stubborn refusal. It was the fact—and she was calmly conscious of it, too—that there was only *one* life-preserver in the boat.

Just why this influenced her was not clear in her mind, but she realized with faint surprise that it did. She even found herself pondering over it, telling herself that it was unethical to seize this lone chance that offered itself only to her; Yet she was doubtful, too, that ethics had anything to do with the matter.

The water in the cockpit was deeper, and there was a growing sluggishness in the movements of the launch that she noted as quickly as the boatman himself.

"Rosalind!"

She lifted her head slightly.

"For Heaven's sake, put it on!"

"No!" she cried almost fiercely.

She felt the grip of his arm tighten convulsively. Something that sounded like a sob came from his throat.

"It's your one chance!" he shouted.

She shook her head.

Then for a brief instant some freak of the gale tore a great rent in the curtain of hail that shrouded them. The boatman's straining eyes had a vision of black rocks fairly in the path of his storm-harried craft. The murk closed in again.

"We're going ashore!" he roared.

Rosalind nodded.

"In half a minute—not more!"

Again she signed that she understood.

"Listen!" His lips were bellowing the words into her ear. "I'll steer until we're ready to hit. Then I'll rush you forward and get you ashore somehow. Understand?"

She nodded.

"Be ready!"

Now he prayed for another glimpse

of the goal that lay ahead, but it was denied him. He could only calculate its nearness; nay, could do little more than guess. Second by second they were closing upon it, yet he dared not release the tiller, for if the launch yawed before she struck she might never strike at all. Safety or disaster lay in the barrier toward which they were sweeping, he knew not which.

But his plans were swiftly made. The woman at his side would have the best chance he could give her.

He tried counting the seconds, but this was useless. If he could but see again for a single instant! It was death to start too soon; death to wait too long. And he could only guess at the moment!

The tension snapped. Why—how—he did not know; the hail still half blinded him. Yet he staggered to his feet, dragging her with him, and rushed forward, knee-deep in the water that filled the rapidly settling launch.

As he neared the bow a black wall sprang out of the gray mist. To Rosalind it seemed to rear itself to an impossible height. The launch lunged heavily toward it.

"Don't cling to me!" he shouted.

At the same instant she was lifted in his arms. As the boatman stepped out upon the slippery, staggering deck the black wall hung over her.

Rosalind felt herself tossed into the air. For what seemed an interminable period she hung suspended in space. Then something rose to meet her feet with a jarring shock. She was standing on a ledge.

Below her, even above the roar of the wind, came the sound of a heavy, crashing blow. The launch had struck. She knew what that meant. The boatman had given her the one chance!

With a gasping sob she whirled about and stepped to the edge of the rock.

"Sam!"

The hail beat upon her cheeks, but she did not feel it as she stared downward at the frothing water. There was no sign of the launch.

"Sam!"

Her voice had risen to a shriek.

Something touched her foot—a hand!

She dropped to her knees and seized it in both hers. He was hanging in mid air, the river lashing hungrily at his feet as his body swayed in the gale.

Afterward he assured her it had been a matter of less than ten seconds. To Rosalind it seemed an eternity. Some of it she achieved herself, although she had no clear recollection as to how.

But he stood at last with the ledge under his feet.

And then, white-faced and laboring for breath, he grinned:

"Good work, pal!"

CHAPTER XXI.

NEW LIGHTS ON SAM.

FOR a little they stood upon the ledge, the storm beating into their faces. Rosalind scarcely sensed the pounding of the hail. She and the boatman had almost clasped hands with death, and the memory of it drove other thoughts from her mind.

The trivial parts of the affair occupied a curiously exaggerated importance in her reflections. She realized that it was absurdly insignificant, yet she found herself considering chiefly, not the fact that by any effort truly astonishing he had flung her to a refuge far above the boiling river, but the mere incident that while she lay in his arms his scrawny beard, cold and wet, had brushed her cheek—yes, even his mustache. She wondered if he had really kissed her; she was not sure. Nor—and this was another curiosity—did she seem to care.

She remembered, too, the stertorous whistling of his breath as he

flung her from him—the queer, Buddhalike appearance of his head, with the hailstones matted among the hair—the way that his eyes blinked as the water streamed down his forehead—the rough and sure clasp of his arms—the fact that one of his feet slid several inches along the rolling deck as he gathered himself for the last effort. All the little things were photographed with microscopic fineness upon her mind.

"There must be better places than this," he suggested. "Come on."

He seized her by the arm, turning her toward a rocky slope that led upward from the ledge. She shook herself free with an impatient energy, resolved that she would do something for herself.

They scrambled up the slope and found themselves at the edge of a grove of trees. Here at last was a partial shelter; they went in under the branches.

Rosalind stumbled ahead, her soaked garments clinging to her legs with a persistence that endeavored to trip her. Now and then a branch snapped ominously above their heads, but they paid no attention to these warnings of a new danger. It seemed like luxury to be shielded even imperfectly from the relentless stabbing of the hail.

"Is it an island?" she asked.

"That's sure," said the boatman as they plunged forward through the shrieking gloom.

"The—the boat is gone?"

She knew it without asking, yet the question rose mechanically to her lips.

"Gone for good," he nodded. "That 'll save you a whole lot of trouble, I guess. I hated to see her go; you had that old carbureter adjusted to a hair."

Rosalind smiled in spite of herself.

"The trouble was in the air-intake," she said as her foot struck sharply against a root, almost upsetting her. "The mixture was too thin."

"I didn't know what it was. *Ouch!* Caught that branch right in the eye.

But it was the new batteries that did the trick most of all."

"And a clean spark-plug," she added as a sudden gust flung her roughly against a tree. "A dirty one is a crime."

"If I get another launch—I'll get a two-cylinder, and— But then I won't be One-Cylinder Sam, will I?"

"Get a four if you can afford it," she advised, pausing for an instant to free her wet skirt from her ankles. "It 'll burn a little more gas, but you'll get more speed and less vibration—Heavens!"

The latter exclamation came as she went headlong over a jutting stone.

He picked her up and steadied her on her feet; then, linking his arm in hers, he urged her forward. The storm roared overhead, but they paid no heed to it.

"Where are we going?" she asked after a little.

"Just going," he replied. "It's better than standing still."

They came to an open space, hesitated for an instant, then plunged out from the shelter of the trees and crossed it. As they neared the farther side a large, dim object barred their way.

"A house!" he exclaimed.

They broke into a run and stumbled up the steps that led to a porch. Rosalind staggered to a willow rocking-chair that was swaying furiously in the wind and sank into it. The boatman looked around him; then grinned broadly.

"Well?" she demanded.

"It's Davidson's!"

The freak of fate that brought her and the boatman to the scene of his escapades impressed her lightly at the time.

"We can get out of the storm then."

"You can, at any rate. Let's see."

He tried a door that stood back of her chair, but found it locked.

"This is the side of the house," he said. "Let's go around front."

She rose wearily and followed him along the porch. The front door was locked also. He bade her wait while he went to the rear, but when he returned it was with the news that all the entrances were fastened. They tried ringing the bell, but it brought no response save the clanging of a gong.

"Servants must be out," he commented. "Joy-riding in the yacht, I suppose. Let's have a look at the windows."

They were fastened.

Rosalind began to shiver. The hail had changed into a downpour of rain, but the wind showed no sign of slackening.

"I guess a locked house won't bother you and me," said the boatman, with a laugh.

He walked to the nearest window, lifted his foot, and sent it crashing through the glass. Through the opening he thrust an arm, slipped back the fastening, and raised the sash.

"Welcome!" he called, beckoning to her.

Without hesitation Rosalind entered the house by way of the window. The boatman followed her.

"So long as there's nobody home I'll come in myself," he said.

They were standing in the dining-room; even in the gloom of the interior Rosalind could discern a shining of glass and silverware that stood on a sideboard. Sam groped along the wall for an electric switch and, finding it, turned on the lights.

"Let's try the library; there's a fireplace there," he said.

Rosalind remembered how he knew, but she felt it was not a time for dwelling upon previous house-breakings. She followed him readily, crossing a broad hall and entering a room where the floor was cushioned with thick rugs.

The chimney-place had been set for a fire, but no match had been applied to the kindlings. He found one on the center table, and Rosalind, sighing con-

tentedly, watched the red flames grow and spread.

Next he pushed a heavy leather chair across the floor close to the hearth, and motioned her into it. She sat obediently and stretched her feet close to the blaze. Without a word, he dropped to his knees and began taking off her shoes.

She felt too comfortable to protest. Besides, he did it with the wholly impersonal manner of a salesman; also, Rosalind reflected, it was a sensible thing to do.

After he had placed her damp shoes close to the fire, at one side of the hearth, he brought her a footstool. Then he disappeared in the direction of the dining-room. When he returned he was carrying a tray, upon which were a decanter and two glasses.

"Sherry?" he asked.

"Thank you."

She took the glass that he filled and sipped its contents. The boatman helped himself.

"Still blowing," he commented as he watched the sparks sucked up the chimney.

Rosalind gave little thought to the tumult without. She was too thoroughly luxurious. Even though her gown was wet, she felt that she had been thrust into a wholly sybaritic environment. Lazily she watched two little, ascending columns of steam as her stockings began to dry before the fire.

"How about eating?" he asked.

"We might," she admitted. "That is, if you know—"

"Been here before," he answered, smiling. "You remember, I guess."

She watched him as he went back to the dining-room, and a minute after that from another apartment she heard sounds, which she judged to indicate the pantry or the kitchen.

It was rather curious to be in a house with a burglar, she reflected. She did not think of it as hazardous, or unlawful, or even improper—merely as curious. Ethics had been

knocked out of her adventure long ago. She was thankful for the wine he brought her; she would be glad when the food came. These were material comforts, very real and needful; and her mind for the present was dwelling only upon material things.

It did not seem to her that it was even unusual to break Mr. Davidson's window, to enter his house, to light his fire, to drink his sherry, to eat his food; these were but mere incidents in a necessary proceeding.

Nor did she waste much thought upon the ringleader and companion in the affair. Who or what he was did not matter much—just then; it was what he did that counted. And Rosalind knew, if she had been alone, that she would have done precisely the same thing. She found it rather pleasant to have somebody else performing the drudgery. He came back with a loaf of bread, some butter, and a can of potted tongue.

"I'm making some tea," he said.

"It 'll be ready as soon as the water boils."

He carved a slice of bread, buttered it for her, and offered it. She accepted with a nod of thanks, and mentally noted the fact that he knew how to cut thin slices.

The food and wine warmed her; they even thawed her wonted austerity. When he had finished eating, the boatman rummaged some cigarettes. He offered her one; she declined, but with a smile. Had she been alone—well, she might.

Under past circumstances, such an assumption on his part would have roused her to rebuke. But she was in an oddly comfortable mood.

As he settled down in a chair and stretched his long legs toward the fire, she studied him furtively. Particularly she studied his head. So far as shape went, it seemed quite unlike any of the pictures that represented the heads of typical criminals. It was rather well constructed, along conventional and respectable lines.

The beard he wore baffled her somewhat in an attempt to read his face; but that also, she decided, represented a normal average. Rosalind was in no sense a criminologist; yet in outward aspects the boatman had a law-abiding appearance.

He even revealed some traits that she admired. He had courage, for one thing; and resource for another. He had strength, too, which counted for something. In certain things he was rather ingenious, if frankly unprincipled.

Strangely enough, the thing for which she would have marked him "Excellent," had she been making out his report-card, was the very one that had so frequently lashed her to anger—his absolute lack of servility.

From most persons, and always from her inferiors, servility was something that Rosalind expected—and detested. She took it as her due; yes, even demanded it. But she despised the thing itself.

The boatman had offered her none. This was presumptuous, of course; yet secretly she set it down to his credit. He never groveled; he was rarely deferential. More often, in fact, he was rude and given to mocking. But he inspired in her a sort of wondering and unaccountable respect.

He stared lazily into the fire, as if oblivious of her presence. Without, the storm still ruled, although it had palpably slackened in fury. Sam seemed to be concerned about nothing save his cigarette.

Abruptly Rosalind rallied from her musings concerning him. She had completely forgotten the reason for her presence on Davidson's Island—that she was being kidnaped into matrimony! Her lips tightened, and she glanced at him sharply.

Had he really meant it? He appeared to have forgotten it completely. And if he had meant it, was it a sign of madness?

Try as she would, she could not reconcile the boatman with presump-

tive insanity. For that matter, she could not reconcile him with much of anything. She never realized until this moment how little she actually knew about him.

He looked up; their eyes met. Rosalind colored faintly. Something shot her thoughts back to the last instant aboard the launch when his wet beard brushed her cheek. She wondered if he really had—there was so much confusion.

"Sam!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Please don't say 'ma'am' to me."

"Why not?"

"It's a word you are not accustomed to employing," she answered.

His study of her face was brief yet comprehensive.

"You think so?"

"I know it. It took you a long while to say it without hesitating. And it does not—well, harmonize with other things that you say."

"All right; I'll quit it, Miss Chalmers."

"You helped me out of a rather bad situation a little while ago," she said slowly.

She wanted to thank him, yet felt instinctively that he did not wish to be thanked.

"Well, I got you into it; that was why."

"Yet if I had left your island alone I would undoubtedly have been caught in the same storm."

"Oh, perhaps!"

"I think it was—splendid!"

"Why, thanks, ma—I mean, Miss Chalmers. Only you did the same for me after you were up on the rock. So that makes it a stand-off."

Something in his manner and his speech perplexed her. Always before there was raillery, derision; now he seemed to cloak himself in a grave reserve.

"Sam!"

He waited for her to continue:

"You are not really a—common boatman," she said very positively.

"Sure of that?"

"Quite. But who are you?"

"You know enough, I guess."

"I'm afraid you *are* a burglar."

"It looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Are you a spy?"

"I'm not on the witness-stand."

"Or a smuggler? And before you answer that I don't mind saying that all smuggling is not—wicked."

He laughed outright.

"You certainly want me to confess something, so you made that one easy. Well, if I'm a smuggler I'm not a very good one, I'm afraid. I haven't been able to smuggle you to the American side yet."

Rosalind stiffened in her chair. Automatically she drew her stockinged feet beneath her skirt. If there was to be another battle she felt that there was a lack of militancy about her feet. A lady without her shoes is scarcely girded for combat.

"That of course was an utterly absurd idea," she said firmly. "But I am willing to consider it as a joke, in view—of all that has happened."

"Much obliged. But it wasn't a joke."

"You couldn't have meant it seriously?"

"Absolutely, Miss Chalmers."

"But why? Whatever put such a wild idea into your head?"

"I told you at the time. No use to go all over it again."

"But you must have had some reason."

"Sure! I wanted to marry you. I should say—'want.'"

"You still—"

"Want to? Oh, yes!"

"And you expect to go on with this impossible—affair?"

This time he merely made a gesture. It might have meant anything.

"Would you marry a woman who hated you?"

He considered this for some time, then looked her evenly in the eyes and answered:

"You don't hate me."

Rosalind flushed, and did some considering on her own account.

"Possibly not," she admitted.

"They say it is wicked to hate, so I try not to. But, even if I do not hate you, why should you have the least reason to think I would marry you?"

"Oh, what's the use of speculating?" he said wearily. "Maybe it was because I wanted to put over a stunt nobody else had been able to do—like finding the north pole."

Rosalind rose suddenly and walked toward a window. Her first impulse was to fly into a temper.

A stunt! The task of winning her had become a—stunt! And he had supplemented the insult by comparing her to the north pole!

Yet even in her anger she felt the urging of a desire to smile. Rosalind was a severe and conscientious self-analyst; she harbored few illusions. There was something in the frigid comparison that struck her as rather clever—possibly true.

Perhaps, after all, she mused, it was a rough compliment. To be classed among things practically unattainable implies a certain distinction.

"And you know," drawled a voice from the fireplace, "the north pole was discovered."

She bit her lip and stared out of the window.

The rain had stopped and the wind was flattening. Overhead the racing clouds were being sundered into groups and patches. She could see intervals of blue.

"A boat!" she called sharply. "Mr. Davidson's yacht!"

Sam sprang from his chair and joined her at the window. The yacht was making the wharf.

"Well, I guess this polar expedition has failed," he observed whimsically. "Better luck next time."

Rosalind was thinking rapidly. The arrival of the yacht meant safety—for her. But what of the boatman?

As they watched together a small procession of persons filed out upon

the dock and began to march to the house.

"Mr. Davidson!" she exclaimed. "He's back!"

The boatman nodded.

"Mr. Witherbee, Mr. Morton, Mr. Williams—oh, everybody! And they have got—Billy Kellogg!"

She could easily discern the short, stout figure of the young man who had admitted to Polly that he was an impostor. He was walking between Mr. Davidson and one of the men servants, his head bent, his attitude that of complete dejection.

The boatman inspected the group with interest, particularly the stout young man.

"Run!" exclaimed Rosalind, turning swiftly upon him.

"And what are you going to do?"

"I'm all right; I can stay. I'll explain—somehow. But you must go. Take the back door, quick!"

"But why should I go?"

"A thousand reasons!"

"So as not to embarrass you," he suggested, watching the oncoming procession.

"I—I didn't mean that. Go, while there's a chance."

"So you don't want me caught?"

"No!"

Still he hesitated. Rosalind gripped him by the arm and pushed him back from the window.

"Hurry!" she commanded. "You have time to get out the back way. Sam—please!"

The boatman smiled.

"All right; I'll disappear," he said.

"Maybe I'll see you again, Miss—No; I'm going to say it just once—Rosalind!"

"You said it back in the boat," she reminded him briskly.

"Then I really got away with it—because you heard."

"Yes; you really—'got away with it,' if that satisfies you. Now run! They're on the porch."

He stepped swiftly across the library and into the hall. The sound of Mr.

Davidson's key in the lock was heard. With a laughing nod at Rosalind, the boatman turned and ran—up-stairs!

"Sam!"

"S-sh!"

Rosalind faced the door desperately.

"Now I must manage to keep them down-stairs," she muttered.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOOTSTEPS ABOVE.

AS the door was flung open Rosalind stood with her back against the newel-post of the staircase, braced for defense against an army. Her brain was in a tumult of activity.

"Rosalind!"

It was Polly's shriek. With it she sprang forward. The lady at the foot of the staircase waved her back with a gesture.

"I'm quite all right, thanks," she said coolly.

"You're half drowned!"

"Not in the least; merely a little wet. Don't bother, Polly."

The men were staring as if at an apparition.

"Well, I'll be—"

Mr. Davidson left the sentence unfinished and resumed his incredulous scrutiny.

It was Reggy Williams's turn to make a rush; but, as in the case of Polly, Rosalind wafted him away with a motion of her hand.

"Please don't make a fuss," she said. "No damage has been done whatever—except to a window. I broke it to get in."

"But how? Where did you come from? What brought you—"

The chorus of voices brought a frown of annoyance to her brow.

"I was rowing when the squall came," she observed quietly. "This was the nearest place to land, so I came here. Apparently nobody was at home, so I had to force my way in in order to get out of the storm."

"We—we didn't know what had happened!" exclaimed Polly, her voice trembling. "We thought you might be—lost."

"I took care of myself quite nicely, thank you. I've had tea and bread and butter, and I lighted a fire."

Rosalind's glance scanned the group and rested upon the stout young man. He stood limp and unresisting in the grasp of Mr. Davidson's butler. In the surprise of the meeting he had been forgotten. He seemed quite content to have it so.

"Well, thank the Lord, you're safe!" said Mr. Davidson heartily. "Glad you made yourself at home; the house is yours. I got your telegram, you see."

He turned to glare at the prisoner, who was bestowing upon Rosalind a look of gloomy reproach. She eyed the young man coldly.

"I thought it was best to send for you," she said.

"Best! I should say it was! You—you impostor!"

The master of the house shook his first under the nose of the prisoner, who retreated a pace.

"Of course he isn't your nephew?"

"That! My nephew? I should say not!"

The stout young man shifted his feet.

"Once more I'll give you a chance to tell who you are," said Mr. Davidson as he whirled upon the fellow.

The captive remained dumb.

"See that!" exclaimed Mr. Davidson. "He won't say a word. Hasn't said a word since I got here. We've searched him. And, by George, he's got letters on him addressed to my nephew, Billy Kellogg! And letter-heads with the name of 'Hastings & Hatch'! I tell you there's something bad here."

"You think—"

"That maybe it's—*murder*!"

Polly suppressed a little shriek, while the stout and speechless young man shook his head miserably.

"Yes—murder! Why not?" demanded Mr. Davidson. "He's probably done away with my nephew, taken his place in New York, and all that sort of thing. I'm wiring for more news now. The scoundrel—"

"But if that's the case," broke in Reggy Williams, "I don't see why he'd want to come up here."

"Perhaps to finish his bloody work—to kill me!"

The prisoner sagged into the arms of the butler.

"That seems rather incredible," mused Rosalind.

Her observation of the captive had long ago driven her to the conclusion that he was quite harmless.

"Incredible!" echoed Mr. Davidson. "Everything's incredible here lately. If it's not murder, what is it? Where's my nephew? This man won't tell. He knows; he's simply *got* to know! He hears I'm away and he comes up here posing as Billy. If it hadn't been for Polly here or Morton he'd have fooled you all."

"But Mr. Morton—"

Rosalind checked herself and glanced at the Englishman. He chewed one end of his mustache, but remained silent. Morton had taken no part in the exposure; on the contrary, he had accepted the impostor.

"Oh, Morton pretended to know him, just so as to be able to watch him better," said Mr. Davidson. "I understand all about that. But what I want to know is, who *is* this scoundrel? Are you going to tell, sir? Who are you?"

The young man remained steadfastly silent.

"Maybe I can make him talk," said Reggy Williams grimly, advancing his huge bulk toward the captive.

It was Mr. Witherbee who remembered first. Reggy's heart! Everybody had forgotten it in the turmoil.

"Never mind, old man," he said anxiously, with a restraining hand on Reggy's arm. "Take a chair. Sit down."

Reggy looked at him disgustedly.

"Will somebody kindly explain to me what this take-a-chair game is?" he demanded. "Everybody seems to be crazy on the subject of chairs; everybody wants me to sit down. I don't want to be disobliging; but, great Scott! a man can't sit down all his life!"

Rosalind, still on guard at the newel-post, was chewing her lips.

Polly's eyes were distended with apprehension.

"Well, never mind trying to make him talk now," said Mr. Witherbee soothingly. "Just leave it to Davidson."

"I'm going to leave it to the police," said that gentleman. "I've sent for them. We're going to have a few things explained before I get through. First, there's my nephew's murder."

"But you're not sure about that," Rosalind reminded him. "Perhaps he'll turn up all right."

"Perhaps." But Mr. Davidson's tone was pessimistic. "We'll know before long, at any rate. Then there's that boatman who's been hanging around here. I've got men out after him now."

Rosalind breathed softly. She was eagerly yet fearfully listening for some sound from up-stairs.

"What is he wanted for?" she asked.

"Burglary—almost everything! He is in on this; we feel sure of it. Morton tipped me to get him."

Rosalind studied the Englishman swiftly, but his face was impassive. So Morton had turned on the boatman at last! She wondered why.

"Don't forget the smuggling either," said Mr. Witherbee.

"I haven't," answered the master of the house. "I've sent for the customs men. I want them to look this chap over, and also that boatman—when we get him."

"Some of them think the boatman is a spy," Polly reminded him.

"Likely enough. But that's none

of my affair. He can spy till he's blind so far as I'm concerned. I want him for housebreaking."

Rosalind experienced a qualm, not of conscience but of anxiety. She felt that her house of cards was about to topple. If they did get the boatman, what of her?

"Well, no use standing here," said Mr. Davidson. "We can't do anything more, I suppose, until the police come. Let's go into the library."

"And what'll I do with him, sir?" asked the butler, indicating his prisoner.

"Take him up-stairs and lock him in the attic."

Rosalind's hand went to her throat. Instinctively she moved to bar the stairway.

"I wouldn't," she advised hastily. "He might escape."

"Can't," declared Mr. Davidson emphatically. "He's too big to get through an attic window, and if he did manage it he'd drop about forty feet to the ground. Take him up-stairs, James."

"No," said Rosalind firmly.

Mr. Davidson looked at her in surprise.

"I've a better plan," she continued quickly. "Keep him with us. Watch him. Study him. Sometimes they—they betray themselves."

The prisoner regarded her with appealing eyes.

"All right; watch him if you like," assented Mr. Davidson. "Bring him into the library, James."

Not until the last of them had left the hall did Rosalind desert her post at the foot of the staircase. As she moved to follow she gazed swiftly upward, but the boatman was not in sight.

Her mood was a mixture of alarm and irritation. For the life of her she could not understand why Sam committed the folly of seeking a refuge up-stairs, when there were easy avenues of escape by the rear of the house. True, he might make his exit by an

upper window and across the porch-roof; but it was an extra and a useless hazard. Most amazing was the fact that she did not know whether he was still in the house. She prayed he was not, but feared otherwise. Nobody must go up-stairs until she could be sure.

It did not add to her peace of mind to discover as she followed the prisoner and his captors into the library that she was shoeless. Over by the fire her slippers were still drying. Mr. Morton was staring solemnly at them.

With icy dignity she glided past him and picked them up.

"Ah—allow me," he said, dropping to one knee.

"Thank you, but I always put on my own shoes," said Rosalind.

Damp as they were, she contrived to squeeze into them. They gave her a sense of security.

"You must have been good and hungry, Rosalind," remarked Reggy Williams.

He was examining the tea-tray with its two cups and saucers. She did not at first understand.

"Certainly I was hungry."

"As hungry as two people, evidently."

She colored faintly, but answered readily enough: "Oh! you mean the two cups and saucers. I did it absent-mindedly. I'm not accustomed to lunching alone."

Reggy's finger touched a cigarette-butt that lay on the tray; his glance was accusing.

"I admit it," said Rosalind coldly. "Is there any reason why I should not?"

Reggy made a disapproving gesture, but answered not.

"There are two more on the hearth," she added, pointing.

"But, Rosalind—"

"I am exceedingly fond of them. That is sufficient."

She spoke with a finality that discouraged him, which was exactly what she intended. Mentally she added an-

other mark to the score against the boatman.

The stout young man had been placed in a stiff-backed chair near a window. The butler stood vigilantly at his side, ready to descend upon him if he made a suspicious move. But the prisoner was inert. All volition as well as speech had deserted him.

Mr. Davidson paced the library, talking volubly. Now and then he halted in front of the victim and glowered at him belligerently. That young man was too impassive even to think. He seemed utterly uninterested in his fate.

Mr. Witherbee tried to insinuate a chair under the legs of Reggy Williams, which brought an outraged snort from that gentleman. Rosalind was beginning to feel the tension. Would the boatman never go? Or had he gone?

They pressed her for the story of her own adventures and she supplied it rapidly as she could invent. It was not easy to eliminate Sam from the recital; more than once she checked his name on her lips. Yet she managed a very fair yarn. It filled Polly with thrills of awe and admiration. She could not take her eyes from the narrator.

In fact, so completely did she study the figure of this remarkable young woman that she was moved to a startled exclamation:

"Why, Rosalind!"

Polly was pointing at Rosalind's left arm. It was too late to hide it; the bracelet was glowing dully in the afternoon light.

"Where on earth did *you* get it?"

Rosalind flushed with anger and dismay. Reggy was staring, also.

"So you do wear it sometimes," he said with a sigh.

"But it's the one we found!" exclaimed Polly, bewildered. "And then we gave it to the sale. And they lost it! And—why, Rosalind!"

The wearer of the telltale ornament was for once speechless. All her re-

sourcefulness was swept away in an instant. Her cheeks were very red, but her eyes were defiant. The look she gave Polly was fairly murderous.

A noise from up-stairs caused abrupt silence in the library. Everybody heard it clearly. It was a footstep!

Rosalind stopped breathing and waited. Mr. Davidson held up a warning finger. The young man in the chair looked expectant.

The first footstep was followed by others. There was nothing stealthy about them; they were frank, careless, and unconcerned. Somebody was walking along the upper hall!

An instant later and the footsteps were on the staircase, descending leisurely. The tableau in the library was held without a quiver by its actors. Their eyes were staring toward the doorway that led into the hall. Rosalind was rigid as bronze. She alone knew what the footsteps portended. The game was up!

Very deliberately they came nearer and nearer. She even found herself counting them mechanically. It was like the approach of nemesis. Had the boatman gone mad again?

The footsteps were in the hall now. Mr. Davidson's stout body began to quiver; he was poised as if for a spring, his eyes ablaze with determination, his hands—

A young man in white flannels walked into the library.

He was slender and tall and immaculate. Under his coat he wore a delicately striped silk shirt. His collar and scarf were beyond criticism. His canvas shoes were spotless.

A casual observer would have noted but one unusual fact; the upper half of his face was deeply tanned, while his cheeks, his lip and his chin were pallid. He was cleanly shaved.

"Hello, folks!" he grinned.

Mr. Davidson made the spring for which he had been poised.

"Billy! You young scoundrel!"

In the same instant he enveloped the intruder with a bearlike embrace.

The young man gazed placidly over Mr. Davidson's head and straight into the eyes of Rosalind Chalmers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNSCRAMBLING THE MYSTERY.

HOT resentment overcame Rosalind's—resentment at the boatman's duplicity, at the trick he had played upon her, at her own lack of perception. It was succeeded by a sense of extraordinary humiliation. She felt as if a cross section had been carved out of her life and spread before vulgar eyes upon the slide of an inexorable microscope—for she did not pause to consider that much of what had happened was known only to Sam and herself.

Then came a period of panic. There would be revelations, of course. How far would they go?

Yet, while her mind was in an agony of agitation, she managed to maintain her poise. Steadily, and without wincing, she stared into the face of Billy Kellogg—and waited.

Mr. Davidson stepped back a pace and surveyed his nephew.

"But—when did you get back?" he cried.

"I haven't been away."

"What!"

William Kissam Kellogg smiled benignantly at his uncle.

"But how—what—where—"

Mr. Davidson paused to recover his breath. The glance of the ex-boatman wandered to other members of the party.

"Hello, Polly!" he said.

Polly was speechless—unable to answer the salutation. She gazed upon Kellogg as she would at some supernatural thing.

"There seems to be a great deal of fuss about nothing in particular," he remarked. "What's up?"

"Up!" repeated Mr. Davidson.

"Everything's up! You're alive!"

"I hope so."

"We—we thought you were murdered," faltered Polly, finding speech.

"Honestly? What put that idea into your head?"

For answer, Mr. Davidson pointed grimly at the stout young man in the chair.

"Hello, Bob!" said Billy Kellogg casually. "You couldn't duck it—eh?"

The prisoner shook his head miserably.

The nephew chuckled as he greeted the captive with a hand-shake.

"Bob's all right," he assured his uncle. "He's a friend of mine."

Mr. Davidson's jaw was hanging.

"But you—you—"

"Why not introduce me, Uncle Henry?"

The master of the house gulped, and performed the ceremony in a bewildered and perfunctory style. Toward the last he arrived at Rosalind.

"My nephew, Billy Kellogg," he said lamely.

Rosalind bowed almost imperceptibly. Her eyes were hard and questioning. Inwardly she trembled; but she did not flinch. The former boatman studied her with a whimsical glance.

"We've met before, Miss Chalmers," he said, bowing.

"I believe so," she answered briefly.

"You see," said Kellogg, turning to his uncle, "I've had the honor of serving Miss Chalmers at odd times within the last few days. We— Why, hello, Reggy!"

For the first time he appeared to observe Reginald Williams, who had been watching the scene in dumb amazement.

"Bill Kellogg!" he exclaimed. "You mean to tell me that you were—"

Billy nodded and grinned.

"Of course I don't need to introduce Morton," said Mr. Davidson.

Billy looked at the Englishman and nodded coldly.

"No, you don't need to," he agreed.

Mr. Morton preserved a calm exterior. He contented himself with returning the bow.

"Now explain yourself!" ordered Mr. Davidson peremptorily. "When did you quit New York?"

"Haven't been there, Uncle Henry."

"You haven't been at work—at all?"

"Not at the banking-game."

"But how the—"

"Somebody lend me a cigarette," said Billy. "Thanks. I see I've got to tell all."

He cast a swift, malicious glance at Rosalind.

"You see, Uncle Henry," he went on, "it wasn't that I minded banking so much as the fact that I hated to go away and leave this crook here with ten thousand dollars of perfectly good money."

He nodded toward Morton.

"Crook?" echoed Mr. Davidson.

"Sure! Did you think I wasn't wise? I knew it the very night he trimmed me. But he was your guest in *our* house; so what could I say?"

"I knew I'd been buncoed the minute I thought the thing over. So I didn't propose to go away and leave him on the job. I decided to stick around and take a chance on getting it back."

Morton was imperturbable.

"And I got it back," added Billy triumphantly, with a fleeting look at Rosalind.

Mr. Davidson turned a questioning glance upon the Englishman, who nodded and smiled faintly. A bewildered look overspread the face of the master of the house.

"I introduced him to poker," explained Billy.

"Introduced—him!" cried his uncle. "Introduced Morton to poker? Why, you young cub, he played poker before you were out of knee-breeches!"

It was the turn of the young man in white flannels to stare.

"He knows more poker in a minute than you do in a month," declared Mr. Davidson contemptuously. "He eats it! And as for being a crook—well, he happens to be the English representative of my own firm; that's all."

Rosalind enjoyed the discomfiture of the ex-captain of the Fifty-Fifty. "But, uncle, he—"

"Oh, shucks! You think he trimmed you at bridge, do you? All right; he did. I told him to!"

Billy Kellogg swallowed hard.

"That's what I brought him here for," said Uncle Henry. "You needed a lesson, and there was only one way to give it to you. I told him to come here and skin you alive. I wanted a good excuse to send you to work. I told him to trim you for a year's income if he could. And you did, didn't you, Morton?"

The Englishman shrugged in a bored way.

"It was strictly a matter of business between Morton and myself. You were to get your money back at the end of a year—if you behaved. Why, he told me it was as easy as taking a saucer of milk away from a blind kitten!"

Rosalind smiled and made a motion to attract the attention of Billy. She did not want him to miss the smile. He didn't.

"And now explain where you've been," commanded Uncle Henry.

"I haven't been far," said his nephew in a crestfallen tone. "I went over to the American side for a while and thought it over. I decided I wouldn't be a banker. I made up my mind I'd stay here as long as Morton did and lay for him. But of course I didn't want you to get wise, so I kept out of sight until I could grow whiskers. I'm glad they're gone."

He rubbed his chin tenderly.

"After I got whiskers enough I looked around for something to do. A fellow had a boat cheap and I bought it. I had money enough for that. Then I went to work."

Polly Dawson gasped.

"You—were that boatman!"

The nephew nodded.

"You mean the burglar?" demanded Mr. Davidson, whirling upon her.

"You only thought I was a burglar," explained Billy. "I just dropped in now and then when I needed anything."

"You unprincipled rascal! Do you know the Cain you've raised?"

"Something of it, Uncle Henry. I didn't mean to make too much trouble, of course—not any more than was necessary."

Mr. Davidson suddenly recollected the prisoner, who sat in the chair.

"Who's that, then?" he demanded.

"Oh, he's Bob Murray."

"And who in blazes—"

"An old friend. You see, Bob and I went to college together. Bob's a lot different from me. He likes to work. In fact, he *has* to work. Just about the time you shipped me off to Hastings & Hatch—or thought you did—I heard from Bob. He needed a job. So I gave him mine. I sent him the letter and the full directions. And I understand he's done me credit, too."

"Is this true?" demanded Mr. Davidson, glaring at the captive.

The young man nodded.

"Then why didn't you say so?"

"Because I swore him to secrecy," explained Billy. "I told Bob not to squeal until I gave the word. And he stuck by me."

Uncle Henry only half succeeded in suppressing an expletive.

"Of course, Bob didn't want to come when you sent for me," continued Mr. Davidson's nephew. "But I understand the bank ordered him to come, so he couldn't help himself. He knew I was up here, anyway, and figured that I'd straighten it out for him."

The stout young man breathed deeply and contentedly.

"You're a pair of young fools—and scoundrels!" said Uncle Henry heatedly. "One is as bad as the other."

"Oh, hold on," protested Billy. "Go easy there. Bob's a model young banker. They tell me you've said so yourself; that you were so proud of him you spread the news around."

Mr. Davidson gave his nephew a furious look.

"And to think—none of us recognized you!" exclaimed Polly, staring at the former captain of the one-cylinder launch.

"You were the only one I was afraid of," laughed Billy. "You see, you knew me; the rest didn't—except Morton. That's why I wouldn't let you aboard one day after they'd planned to take you. I knew you'd recognize my voice."

"But didn't Mr. Morton?"

All eyes were turned upon the Englishman. He coughed, but said nothing.

"Of course he knew me; but I did not care about him. I knew he would not squeal. You see, I had it on him about the cards—or thought I did."

Mr. Morton permitted himself to smile in a bored way.

"And now I understand why you you were deaf and dumb to me," blurted Reggy Williams with a sheepish flush.

"You see, Reggy and I are old pals," remarked Billy. "I knew he'd never recognize me in my old rig and with the beard; but I didn't dare speak to him. So I played dummy."

Reggy turned an inquiring glance upon Rosalind.

"Was he a dummy when you hired him?" he inquired.

She shook her head.

"But you didn't tell me that!"

The silence threatened catastrophe. It was broken by a strident laugh from Billy Kellogg.

"Oh, I've been having a lot of fun," he said. "Of course I didn't mean to get you all worked up over burglars. Remember the night, Uncle Henry, when you and the help hunted the whole island and then chased me in the launch?"

Rosalind breathed again. The boatman was doing his best to save her.

"Do I remember?" shouted Mr. Davidson. "You bet I do! You young reprobate! I might have shot you; do you know that? And—and who was it that helped you out?"

"Helped me out?" repeated Billy, with an innocent stare and a wrinkling of his forehead. "How do you mean?"

"The other boat—the fellow who boarded you and got your engine going."

The young man in flannels shook his head in a puzzled way.

"No fellow boarded me," he said.

"I tell you we heard him—saw him."

"He didn't come aboard my boat, Uncle Henry. I'll swear."

"Billy, you're lying!"

Mr. Davidson's nephew indicated that he was deeply affronted by the accusation. He gazed solemnly at Rosalind. She was idly turning the leaves of a book that lay on the library table.

"I suppose I must put up with anything," he sighed.

"After what you've made us put up with I should say yes!" snorted Mr. Davidson. "But there *was* somebody else; we've got evidence. It was the other man who tried to rob Witherbee's—the same night! You've been keeping bad company, young man."

Billy glanced again at Rosalind, but her face was averted from him.

"And, Morton, I'm surprised at you," continued Mr. Davidson. "If you really knew him, why didn't you tell me?"

"Um—ah! But—don't you see?—it would have been hardly sporting. Oh, not a bit!"

"And you deliberately let me go on making a fool of myself!"

The Englishman shrugged.

"And it was you who sent the customs men to look up Morton, I suppose," added Mr. Davidson, turning again to his nephew.

"I'm sorry I did that; it was just an impulse. I only wanted to bother him some."

Uncle Henry made an exasperated gesture.

"Well, you're disgraced, and so am I," he growled. "You're a worse scapegrace than I believed. You've made a fool out of everybody, including Miss Chalmers, who I understand has been employing you."

Rosalind looked up from the book and shook her head.

"Billy didn't make a fool out of me," she said.

The ex-boatman blinked.

"You see, I knew him from the first," she added. "In fact, I've known him a good while. But—although perhaps it wasn't very considerate of the others—I didn't say anything because— Well, for the same reason that Mr. Morton gave. It hardly seemed sporting."

Billy bit his tongue savagely; but he could not hide the little wrinkles at the corners of his eyes.

"What's she up to now?" he thought.

"So I just let the joke go on. If it was wrong, I'm sorry," concluded Rosalind.

"And you mean that you two have known each other all the time?" cried Polly, staring from one to the other.

"All the time," confirmed Billy. "Why, I've known Rosalind since she was a tomboy and—and climbed trees."

Rosalind flushed, but she nodded what was interpreted as a confirmation.

"Well," demanded Mr. Davidson, after a pause, "what am I going to tell the police when they come?"

"Try to head 'em off," suggested his nephew.

The master of the house accepted the suggestion and moved toward the telephone. As he lifted the instrument the bell began ringing.

"Well?" he asked, the receiver at his ear. "Yes, it's Mr. Davidson.

What? Say it again. Richardson? Who— Oh, yes. I understand—yes.

"Tried to get Witherbee? Yes, he's here; we're all here. Yes, Mr. Morton is here, too.

"What's that? Well, what do you know about that?

"Huh? Sure!

"What? Yes; I'll tell him.

"Oh, certainly! It'll be all right. Glad you got him. Congratulations! Yeh—fine! Uh-huh! All—right!"

He replaced the instrument on the table.

"Customs men," he explained.

"They wanted to apologize for bothering Morton the other day. They've got their man."

"Who?"

"Fellow that's been smuggling diamonds. Got him with the goods only an hour ago. A chap named Schmidt."

Rosalind and Billy exchanged swift looks.

"Why, that's the man they thought was a spy!" cried Polly.

"Well, he wasn't. He was just a plain smuggler."

"But, Billy, he used to hire your boat."

The ex-boatman made a weary motion with his hands.

"It's getting too many for me," he said. "He told me he was a grain-broker. A right decent sort of cuss, too."

"So you've been aiding and abetting a smuggler," remarked Mr. Davidson slowly as he glared at the boatman. "That's fine business for a nephew of mine. What else have you been doing? Any murders or embezzlements, or anything like that? Any highway robberies? Or maybe you were a pirate—eh? Well, why don't you answer?"

"What's the use? You're covering all the main points, I guess. I can't think of anything else."

Uncle Henry abandoned in disgust the task of cataloguing the probable misdeeds of his nephew and turned to

the telephone in an effort to head off the police.

"Well, I suppose we may as well be going back," observed Mr. Withersbee. "There doesn't seem to be anything more to find out."

That reminded Polly.

"But the bracelet!" she exclaimed. "Rosalind! How in the world—"

Polly broke off abruptly and looked about the room.

"Why, where is she?"

Rosalind had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CURTAIN!

TRUST Billy Kellogg to find her! He did. She was down in the boat-house, trying to smash a padlock that detained one of Mr. Davidson's skiffs. There was no doubt she was tremendously anxious to leave the island.

At his approach she looked up defiantly.

"Well?" she demanded.

"I did my best," he said contritely.

It was impossible to miss the resentment in her eyes.

"Your best!"

"I didn't tell any more than I had to," he explained. "You see, Rosalind—"

"Mr. Kellogg!"

"Oh, well! You called me Sam not so very long ago. And only a few minutes back I was Billy—and you said you had known me a good while."

"In self-defense."

"I don't see how—"

"It forestalled endless explanation," she said in a chilled voice.

"But you don't suppose all the explaining is over, do you?" objected Billy. "Polly was still asking about the bracelet when I left."

Rosalind sat on a nail-keg and stared at him combatively.

"I hope you are satisfied after having disgraced me," she said.

"I got your bracelet."

"And made a fool of me from beginning to end!"

"You dared me."

"I?"

"Yes—ma'am."

He smiled in a way that merited annihilation.

"Of course you dared me," added Billy. "Everything you did or said was a dare. Every time you were so scornful and so superior it was a dare. Why, I couldn't have helped it if I'd tried. And I didn't try, as a matter of fact."

Rosalind was in a strange plight of mind. She tried to summon haughtiness, but the mood would not respond. Her armor seemed to have fallen from her.

"You—you were brutally insulting," she faltered.

"I suppose I wasn't very polite," he admitted. "Nevertheless, you'll have to admit you weren't very polite to me. Let's forget the whole business."

"Forget?"

"Why not? What's the use of rehashing it?"

"You expect me to forget—after what has happened? The tree—and the water—and the por—portrait!"

"It wasn't a portrait," he said mildly. "I made a mistake. As for the telegram—Bob misunderstood when I wired him. I only wanted to be sure who you were. I wasn't bidding. At first I thought it wasn't a bad picture. But I found out I was wrong."

She looked up at him.

"Why, that portrait didn't begin to resemble you—ma'am."

"Please—I asked you!"

"Not to say 'ma'am.' I remember now. But it's so hard not to say 'Rosalind.'"

She made no answer to that.

"I wish you'd lash out at me just as you did when I was a boatman," he went on. "I was getting used to that."

Still Rosalind had no answer. She was groping blindly for her old foot-

ing, but could not find it. Everything had gone in the crash.

"Please unfasten the skiff," she said after a pause.

"What for?"

"I—I wish it. I'm going home."

"In a skiff?"

She met his glance with a flash of her old disdain.

"I'll go if I have to swim," she said.

"Haven't I undergone enough? Haven't I been humiliated and made ridiculous and—"

"Not necessarily. It all depends on whether we're going to confess the whole business or stand on our constitutional rights. They don't know a tenth of it—yet. Why should they? We told 'em we'd known each other a long time. Why not play the hand out?"

Rosalind's eyes questioned him.

"I mean, why not resume the voyage—for Ogdensburg?"

She gasped.

"Certainly; why not?"

She rallied swiftly from the shock of the proposal.

"I think you forget yourself," she said sternly.

"Not a bit." He shook his head.

"I haven't forgotten anything. On the contrary, I'm remembering all that happened and all that was said. I'm remembering about our being pals. You needn't jump at that. It's not a bad word, after all—pals. I say, let's go ahead."

"Mr. Kellogg!"

"Make it 'Billy.'"

She shook her head.

"'Sam,' then."

She remained silent.

"I suppose I ought to apologize for a lot of it," he muttered. "But somehow I can't. You know as a matter of fact you deserved most of it."

Rosalind sat very straight on the nail-keg.

"Yes; you did. You were so all-fired scornful of everybody and everything—particularly me. You rubbed it in. You just carved me into slivers

every time you spoke—and I guess you thought I wasn't even good enough to furnish slivers.

"I'll admit I'm not much use in the world; I'm about as useless as the first six rows in a movie house. But that wasn't any reason for climbing me every time I did something or said something. So far as usefulness goes I'll stack up with Reggy, anyhow.

"Wait a minute now. I'm not going to hurt your feelings. That was just a preface. Here's the rest of it: All the time you were carving me and climbing me I was strong for you. That's Gospel. I just had to be. You bullyragged me into loving you."

"What?"

"Perhaps that doesn't sound quite right. I don't mean that you tried to. But I mean that every time you clouted me I loved you some more.

"Wait—please wait! We'll cut out the trip to Ogdensburg. I see you're not ready for that—yet.

"Yes; I said, 'Yet.' I'm filing a claim. Some day I'm going to take it up, perhaps after we've known each other a conventional time.

"I'll admit it may not seem very promising now. But the gold's there, Rosalind. I *know* it. You may have hidden it from a lot of other people, but you can't hide it from me."

Rosalind's nineteenth—or was it the eighteenth, or twentieth?—proposal bewildered her.

"So remember! It stands this way: I love you, and some day I'm going to marry you. I'll wait—but I won't quit."

He paused and watched her for some sign, but she was mute, motionless. Suddenly his voice changed.

"Oh, if you'd only let yourself go, Rosalind! If you'd only throw off the mask! You nearly did, back in the launch, when it was all touch and go for a few minutes.

"I don't love you because you're brave or capable or wonderful. That's only part of you—the part everybody sees. But there's a lot more than

that. You've tried to bury it out of sight in your woman's heart, but it won't stay there always. It's the real you—and I'm going to have it!"

There was a moment of silence. Then Kellogg spoke with his old briskness.

"Well, let's see if we can get the skiff loose. You want to get over to Witherbee's as soon as possible, I guess. Your gown isn't dry yet."

Rosalind nodded. She watched him as he fumbled with the padlock. She had the sensation that something extraordinary was happening to her—a sort of transmigration from one existence to another.

Her mind was not working very clearly; it groped. Through it all ran a faint and vague whisper of alarm. She wondered if she was losing her sure and steady grip on Rosalind Chalmers. It was so absurd, too; so unthinkable—so—

"Funny about Schmidt, wasn't it?" remarked Billy, still struggling with the lock. "I never had the least idea. Did you?"

She shook her head mechanically and without the least thought of the boatman's patron.

"I'm getting Uncle Henry to fix things up for Bob," he went on. "He's going to keep the banking-job. Poor devil! He's been scared stiff for the last two days. What did you think of him, anyhow?"

This time she did not hear his question at all.

The padlock came loose in his hand, and he unchained the skiff.

"All ready," he said. "I'll row."

But Rosalind did not take the hand that he reached to steady her. It was busy, unclasping the bracelet on her arm. An instant later she flung the golden treasure far out into the river.

"Rosalind!"

She looked at Billy with a smile of contentment.

"There goes the last of my lies," she said with a luxurious sigh. "I've told so many that I'm completely

ashamed of myself. And most of them were all on account of that."

She pointed to where the bracelet had disappeared forever.

"It seemed to chain me to so many things I want to get rid of," she added thoughtfully. "It was not only the lies—it was almost everything. And I simply had to do something physical to break away."

The incompetent boatman nodded to signify that he understood—but he didn't. Something in her eyes baffled him.

"Well, hop in," he said shortly, breaking the tension.

Rosalind drew back a step from the skiff.

"I object to being ordered to do things," she said firmly.

"I beg your pardon. I meant—"

"You mean to ask, of course," she broke in.

"Yes; certainly."

"That's better," she said softly.

"It is very much nicer to be asked."

She was about to embark when he gripped her suddenly by the shoulders and stared into her face.

"What did you mean by that?" he demanded, shaking her gently. "Am I dreaming—or crazy? 'Nicer to be asked!' Rosalind! Why—I'm a fool! Did you mean—"

"Ask me."

He got his answer, too, even if it was slightly muffled.

In the latest print of Hamersly's "Social Register" there is a cross-index on a certain page among the C's that refers the reader to a certain other page among the K's; or if you happen to hit the K page first, an equally obliging cross-index will send you back to the C's, if you are at all curious. If you look under "Sam," you'll find there's nothing at all. It is because of that very omission that two certain persons have agreed that Hamersly's is trashy, unreliable and incomplete, and have canceled their subscription.

An Officer and-a Cur



by Robert Rossow

IT was Dewey's victory in Manila Bay that gave impulse to Christiansen's conversion from attorney to soldier. Two weeks after its organization Christiansen's regiment, the Fortieth Kansas Volunteers, was under orders for the Philippines. On the day before its departure Christiansen applied for a permit to be absent from his company for six hours, but it was curtly refused by his company commander, Captain Harley P. Stevens—captain by virtue of his previous experience as a cadet in a middle West military academy.

It is doubtful whether he would have secured the permit at all if he had not observed his grandiose captain shortly afterward deprive the camp of his presence.

Sweet, the first lieutenant of the company, whom Christiansen approached in the absence of the captain, had a disposition even as his name.

"Sure, Tom, I'll sign a permit for you," he said with an absence of military formality that appealed to Christiansen.

So Christiansen hurried to town, on the outskirts of which his regiment lay encamped. He stopped in at a jeweler's-store, where he spent a great part

of his savings on an object that the jeweler described as "one carat, thirty-two facet, in a setting of fourteen-carat gold."

He regarded the glittering thing that nestled so royally in its bed of violet plush with a caress in his eyes before he tucked it into his blouse-pocket. Then he strode forth, resolved soon to be made happy or the reverse.

When Kathleen Morton, who was sitting alone on her ancestral porch, saw Christiansen's uniformed figure swing up the path, the look of worried uncertainty in her brown eyes changed to one of gladness. She rose from the pillow-littered swing to meet him.

"I'm glad—glad," she said a bit breathlessly, "that you came to see me before leaving."

For a soldier, presumably brave and daring, it took Christiansen a long time to come to the point where he risked all in the storming of the citadel. But finally in desperation he opened the attack, at first haltingly, then wholeheartedly.

His words—his love—poured forth in a flood of inspired utterances; he emptied his heart to the very dregs. "I'm a pauper," I know," he said apologetically—"and I wouldn't have dared to speak if I stayed here. But

this—this is different. I couldn't—I couldn't leave until I knew."

Kathleen sat listening, her trembling hand pressed over a tumultuous heart. And after he had finished her eyes suddenly filled with a light that caused Christiansen to open wide his big arms and gather her to him.

The ring fitted her finger perfectly. They intermittently looked at it and each other for the next two hours; then there came an unwelcome interruption in the person of Captain Stevens. He wore his immaculate service uniform as one to the manner born. In comparison Christiansen felt shoddy.

The gallant captain's walk was rather unsteady as he approached the house; his eyes were somewhat blood-shot. Christiansen deduced that he came from a farewell party and that his boon companions were not ardent supporters of the much agitated prohibition movement that gripped the State at the time.

A look of surprise, followed by one of keen displeasure and anger came to the officer's flushed face when he observed Christiansen.

"I'm glad you found time with all your duties to come and see me, Captain Stevens," Kathleen greeted him.

The captain bowed, then turned to Christiansen.

"How is it that you are away from your company, Private Christiansen?" he asked with a military rasp, to his words.

Christiansen came to an awkward, stiff attention and saluted.

"Lieutenant Sweet granted me a permit, sir," he answered, not at all sure whether he had committed a grave military offense or not.

"I refused to grant it to you for military reasons," said the captain, his voice trembling with an inner anger. "You should not have taken advantage of my absence and gone to one of my subalterns. Lieutenant Sweet will have to answer to me for assumption of authority. And you—you will return to your company immediately."

"Yes, sir," answered Christiansen, weak with mortification. "But—please, sir—captain—don't reprimand Lieutenant Sweet. It was my fault; he didn't know, I'm sure."

"Hold your tongue, sir!" snapped the captain. "I am quite capable of handling the affairs of my company without your advice."

Christiansen flushed under the sting of the humiliation; he was angry, too, at the indignity, the injustice of it. But he saluted and obediently started to go. It was an effort—a great effort. For this leave-taking was not at all as he had planned it. Under the circumstances it was cruel—inhuman even.

Kathleen must have thought so, too. She had been standing silent, nervously concerned.

"Please, captain," she interceded with a blush at her temerity and confession. "I—I expected Mr. Christiansen."

She held up her hand suddenly—the one with the ring on it—and added with a radiant smile:

"See—we are betrothed. We—"

She stopped, struck dumb by the terrible look that came to Captain Stevens's face.

He started to speak, but only managed guttural, unintelligible noises. His eyes shifted from her to Christiansen. Then suddenly he thrust his hand into his breast-pocket and produced an object that he dropped to the tiled floor of the porch as if it were red-hot; he ground his heel down on it viciously, furiously. Then he darted a look of black hate at Christiansen and strode down the walk.

Kathleen and Christiansen stood appalled, their eyes focused on the smashed thing on the floor.

It was a ring with a diamond.

When they looked up and their eyes met, Kathleen nodded in answer to the look of inquiry in Christiansen's.

"Yes," she said sadly. "You know we were once engaged. That—that is the ring I returned to him. But till now he—he never gave up hope."

"I'm sorry—for him," said Christiansen.

Kathleen suddenly became agitated with fear.

"I'm afraid—I'm afraid for you, Tom!" she cried. "He—he seemed capable of anything!"

Christiansen laughed.

"Didn't you notice my esteemed commander's condition?" he asked. "To-morrow he'll wish he hadn't wasted a perfectly good ring."

The regiment arrived in Manila without mishap, and, thanks to the influence of its energetic and capable commander, Colonel Watrous, it was sent to the front immediately.

There followed days of campaigning in the tropical swamps and hills of Samar. The soldiers pushed ever onward, doggedly, desperately—fighting fever, rebel, dense forest. In two months the regiment's entire strength was diminished by twenty per cent in dead alone; thirty per cent of the remaining were strewn from *barrio* to *barrio*, wounded and sick with the many ravaging diseases of that tropical Tophet, and ten per cent of the still remaining were left behind to care for them.

But there was no pause. The men were impelled by a mite of a man who was adamant, courageous and ambitious, and who was inspired to the duty assigned to his regiment thoroughly, who was fanatical in his zeal. The whole campaign was described in the little colonel's oft rasped:

"This place needs a house-cleaning! It's our job."

Christiansen did his duty as he saw a soldier's duty, and did not murmur. He was slightly wounded once and filled with fever a dozen times, but managed somehow to keep going.

He and his captain had nothing in common, so it was an easy matter to maintain the barrier that the fortunes of love had put between them. Their intercourse ended with words essential in the line of duty.

Christiansen, at first doubtful and wary, had gradually become convinced that his commander held no malice. Captain Stevens was not only impartial, but seemed at times actually to favor him.

There was never a hazardous job, an especially dangerous detail or exposed post, that Stevens did not select him for. There was night after night of outpost duty, of patrol duty, of scouting duty, of guard duty.

Christiansen thought it was because of his efficiency that he was so favored. Captain Stevens often spoke a curt word of praise to him after an especially well-executed task. It never failed to win a glow of keen pleasure, and he would work the harder for it.

Though he noticed that he was not rewarded for his valiant services by promotion to a non-commissioned grade, he was too modest to think he deserved it. He remained a private, while others of less efficiency and courage were raised in rank nearly every week.

And it was the privates upon whose thinning ranks extra duty fell especially hard. After weeks of it it seemed to Christiansen that guards, night-patrols, and outpost duty were all that comprised life these days; he could scarcely remember when he had had a full night's sleep. Sometimes on the march it required all his will-power to keep going—to resist the temptation to desert the straggling line of soldiers, crawl into the heat-radiating underbrush and sleep, sleep, sleep. Oh, sometimes he felt as if he would have bartered his very life for sleep—for one night's undisturbed slumber!

He was becoming emaciated and hollow-eyed; a slow-burning fever was tearing at his vitals continually; but he would not say, "Enough." Day after day, when some of his weaker-spirited comrades had to drop out, his lips would curl in a contemptuous sneer.

"Quitters!" he would mutter to himself.

It was spirit alone that kept him going—spirit alone that caused him to accept double his share of arduous duty without complaint.

Flesh had its day, however.

It happened on the return march of Watrous's apparently successful campaign of subjugation—three days' hike from Cathalogan, the starting point. To all outward appearances there wasn't a rebel who professed to be a rebel left on the island.

But Watrous the cautious did not permit a relaxation on the part of officers and men. Duty was duty, and it had to be performed whether there seemed any necessity for it or not.

Christiansen with his usual luck was assigned to Outpost Number Three—the most exposed and strategically important of the whole chain of posts. It was Captain Stevens, the officer of the day, who detailed him for it.

The night was inky, balmy, restive, though the surrounding jungle reeked with the heat and humidity of the day before. Familiar noises—noises of tropical jungle-life—issued from its impenetrable fastness unnoticed, unheeded.

Christiansen stood leaning on his rifle-barrel—listening, peering, alert. Regulations said that he had to remain motionless while on outpost duty; he cursed silently when he thought of the rule. From time to time he shifted noiselessly to rest his aching, weary limbs. His overworked body cried for rest, his smarting eyes for sleep. Again and again his faculties became stupid, and his head fell forward limply on his tensely clasped hands. Once his involuntary relaxation caused him to topple over and fall heavily to the sodden ground. He rose with a piteous whine.

He longed and prayed for the cautious, welcome tread of the relief; he counted slowly, estimating each count as the passing of a second's time, until his brain became hopelessly befuddled and he imagined himself telling off the seconds of eternity.

Then there came the temptation to sit down and rest just for a minute—just for a second! He fought it, cursing himself for the mere thought. But it returned to him again and yet again, each time more alluring, more enticing in its invitation.

He smothered a whimper savagely—brokenly.

And then he played his last card. He drew his bayonet from its scabbard and set the point firmly against his thigh; he drove it into the quivering flesh slowly, steadily, unflinchingly. The warm blood trickled down his leg and oozed out of his worn shoe. The pain was excruciating; he fastened his teeth in his trembling lip to keep back a cry. But it served the purpose. He was again alert—wide awake.

Thus he stood for long minutes—hours—days—years—a century, it seemed to him. The moment the wound became numb he would press harder, with pitiless fury. And all the time that which he needed most in his valiant fight against sleep was streaming down his leg in tiny rivulets, sloshing about in his shoe and forming a sticky puddle about his feet.

It had to come! And thanks to a merciful Providence, it came so suddenly that Christiansen was not conscious of it. He shriveled to the ground like a hothouse plant suddenly exposed to the blasts of March. And he slept where he fell—peacefully, sonorously—still clutching his rifle in one hand, his bayonet in the other.

As if waiting for the conquest of sleep, the night became alive with silently flitting shadows. They were portentous shadows—ominous in their very movements—an apparently endless procession of them. They seemed attracted to the distantly smoldering camp-fires of Watrous's command like moths to a flame.

By order of the leader one man was stationed beside Christiansen to warn the others not to kill the American.

"I saw him try to kill himself with

his bayonet," the leader said, "and he could not. Instead he fell to the ground as one dead, though living. God has therefore taken him to Himself; he will die in God's good time. See, then, that he be not harmed."

There was a long silence after the dark forms had ceased slipping past Outpost Number Three—a silence broken only by the raucous snores of Christiansen. At last, seeing that the American would not awaken, the native sentry slipped off to join his fellows, eager for a share in the coming riot of blood.

Then suddenly—like the crack of doom—came inferno!

Watrous's command, feeling secure, was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion; it was heavy, stupid, dazed in its awakening. And *el Tigre del Noche* with his band of *ladrones* collected a frightful rate of interest on his many defeats before he was finally driven off.

Through it all slept Christiansen—peacefully, undisturbed—flat upon his back. Reptiles of the jungle crawled up to his sprawling figure, investigated, hurriedly turned tail and fled in trepidation from the strange, huge monster. Fleeing *ladrones* in fear of the death that was their due stumbled over his prostrate body and madly scrambled to their feet, never stopping to investigate what kind of being it was they trod on.

Hours afterward the officer of the day, Captain Stevens, leading a visiting patrol, found him. Stevens flashed a lantern in the sleeping man's face.

"Ah!" he ejaculated, a gratified note creeping into his voice. "Asleep! So this is where the bandits got through! Sergeant Stone! Men! I call you to witness! Private Christiansen—asleep on post."

A gasp escaped the small squad, but no words were spoken.

Stevens shook the sleeper roughly, and at last, getting no response, violently.

Christiansen opened his eyes and muttered thickly:

"Wha's matter?"

"Wake up!" bellowed Stevens. "You murderer!"

The words seemed to act like an electric shock. Christiansen threw off Stevens's clutching hands and sat up; then after another moment's blankness he struggled to his feet.

"What—what has happened?" he queried with a quaver in his voice. "Tell me! What has happened?"

Stevens told him in hot, searing words; and stricken even as he was Christiansen detected the note of exultation in his superior's voice.

"March him to the guard tent, Stone!" Stevens concluded.

Christiansen preceded the guard, holding up his head with a great effort, trying desperately to be brave. But when he observed the silent, ghostly burial-parties at their work near the camp a sob escaped him, and he dashed the scalding tears from his eyes.

Three days later at Catbalogan Christiansen was brought before the court.

Captain Stevens's testimony was given in an impartial, line-of-duty tone. It was condemning, and everybody in the court-room knew it. The witness sat staring straight before him, sealing Christiansen's death-warrant with pallid lips.

The findings of the court were made public two days later. It ended:

Private Christiansen is therefore sentenced to be shot at sunrise on the day following the publishing of these findings.

The sergeant of the guard handed Christiansen a typewritten copy of the findings in his closely guarded cell, and hurried away before he could read it. He was from Christiansen's company, and they had been friends.

As he read Christiansen bravely throttled the cry of despair that surged from his heart. He had not expected anything less than this, and he had steeled himself against it, but the blow was none the less severe.

He sank down on his cot, convulsively crushing the paper in his hands. For hours he sat inert, stricken, lifeless.

The sergeant of the guard again visited his cell as he still sat there in his stupor and handed him a package of letters. They were the first that he had received since leaving his Kansas home.

Holding them in his hand Christiansen looked at them stupidly. Then, awakening, he discarded most of them with a glance. With the others, a fat half-dozen all in the same handwriting, he settled himself on the edge of the cot. From one he drew a photograph, at which he looked with longing unutterable. He blinked hard to hold back the smarting tears.

"Kathleen!" he murmured with a great sob. "Kathleen—my dear!"

He devoured the letters frenziedly, over and over again. Then for a long time he sat clutching the picture and staring at it.

Two sentences, iterated and reiterated in Kathleen's letters, stuck in his mind. They read:

I'm afraid for you! A woman's intuition tells me that Captain Stevens will seek revenge—behind his authority.

These were the bitterest hours of all Christiansen's existence. Life—love had beckoned to him. And now—death!

Another visit from the sergeant of the guard interrupted him. The sergeant bore a letter from Colonel Watrous. It was typical of that intrepid, upright soldier. In it he extended to Christiansen the courtesy of granting any request that did not interfere with the execution of the sentence.

Christiansen studied the missive for some time; then a peculiar look overspread his face. He requested the sergeant to bring him pen and paper, and forthwith wrote his request.

The early light of a tropical dawn

was streaming into the little window over his cot when he was awakened from his restless, troubled sleep. His executioner stood before him. It was Captain Stevens.

"Why—why did you ask that I be put in charge of your firing-squad?" Stevens chattered, utterly broken.

"You framed me—you'll have to kill me," answered Christiansen.

Stevens threw up his hand and shrank back with an inarticulate cry of terror.

"I am ready, sir," said Christiansen.

Colonel Watrous was pacing up and down the courtyard nervously as the small death-party entered the quadrangle. He approached it with a set expression.

"Be a soldier!" he said, fastening his little hands about Christiansen's like a vise.

"I will, sir!" answered Christiansen, steadying his voice. "I will!"

"Do you want to be blindfolded?" asked the sergeant of the guard, as Christiansen took his place against the wall.

"No," he whispered.

Christiansen stood straight. His lips moved in a short, fervent prayer.

"Ready. Aim!" he heard in the voice of Stevens.

He leaned forward to meet the shock.

Again he heard, as if an echo:

"Ready. Aim!"

And then Christiansen heard a throaty cry. Opening his eyes, the condemned man saw Stevens imploringly throw out an arm to Colonel Watrous, who was standing at one side.

"Colonel!" he cried wildly. "I can't! I framed it on Christiansen! I wore him down with duty. There wasn't a night in the whole campaign that I let him off.

"I knew he'd fall down sooner or later—nobody could stand up under it. I was playing for just this. But now it's come to cases I can't go through with it!"

The colonel raised his hand and stepped forward as if to interrupt; but Captain Stevens rushed on unheeding:

"I want him dead, I tell you—I want him dead! I've always wanted him dead! But I can't give the order to fire—I'm too yellow!"

"Yellow! That's it! Yellow! Yellow! Yellow! I'm too yellow to kill him—and too yellow to live myself!"

It seemed as if Stevens's mind had given way under the mental stress. With a curse he tugged out his revolver and pointed it at his own forehead.

"Stop him!" yelled the little colonel. Too late!

The gun spoke—Stevens crumpled.

For a long minute the colonel mused upon the body, his mouth drawn grimly. At last he turned to Sergeant Stone.

"Dismiss the firing-squad," he ordered. "Christiansen, you're appointed orderly on my staff. It's lucky the report of the court-martial hasn't been forwarded yet; that'll save us a lot of explanation to the War Department. Just forget this whole business, Christiansen; I'll see that everybody else does."

"And now, Christiansen, let me shake the hand of a soldier!"

A \$1,000 Night



by

Rudolph R. Krebs

A TWO-PART STORY—PART ONE.

CHAPTER I.

A FACER.

ON the same day that I was expelled from Hillton College for a glorious lark, at which, despite my money, the long-suffering faculty could not afford to wink, I read in the New York papers of the suicide of Augustus Steele, my guardian and the executor of my father's estate.

The former happening—though it is a matter of keen regret to me now—at

the time cast but a transient shadow over my irresponsible spirit. Indeed, it seemed a visitation of good fortune rather than of bad, for the heavy atmosphere that characterized the classrooms of my guardian's *alma mater* had long irked me.

Why they allowed me to remain for three and a half years is a puzzle to me even now, for although I invariably made a good showing in the semester tests I seldom was prepared for a daily recitation. Besides, I was up to my

eyebrows in every bit of devilment that was brewed, and broke more rules in a week than the faculty could patch together in a month.

Not that I did these things in a spirit of meanness; I was simply finding the ready-to-hand outlet for a store of healthy animal spirits, which, if they had been properly directed, might have furnished me with something solid to fall back on later.

My guardian, deeply immersed in the Wall Street game, paid little attention to what I did or neglected to do. When he received faculty complaints he no doubt shrugged his shoulders and passed them up with the reflection that I'd settle down to earnest work when the time came.

But I—like most of the young fellows that go to college because in the prescribed order of modern training there is no other place for them to go—rarely gave a thought to the matter of some day earning my own living. As long as I received my quarterly allowance with unfailing regularity I was content to let the future take care of its own indefinite self.

The second contingency, however, sent me post-haste to New York. Upon my arrival I learned that Augustus Steele had left nothing but a sickening deficit of some hundred thousands of dollars.

With a fine disregard for equity he had apparently forgotten that there existed a distinction between his own money and that which he held in trust; and the fortune left to me by my father had gone glimmering with Steele's own in an ill-starred raid on Guadalupe Copper.

It was a facer for me. I can never think back to those anxious days without experiencing a strangling sensation about the throat and an all-gone feeling in the region of my stomach.

The bottom of things had dropped out. I felt utterly helpless, a mere frenzied shell of a man, without brain to think or heart to hope.

When calmness and sanity returned

I looked the situation squarely in the face and considered what I had best do. Nothing remained for me in New York. My fortune was lost beyond hope of recovery. Beyond the seventy-odd dollars in my purse I hadn't a cent in the world that I could call my own; and my hotel-bill—an item that formerly was merely an item, annoying but unavoidable—now threatened to make short shrift of that. It was imperative that I do something, and that speedily.

But what?

I worried my finger-nails to the quick in trying to decide. Pride would not permit me to remain with the fraternity boys at Hillton, nor would it permit me to borrow of them. Economy urged me to obtain work somewhere.

One thing was certain: I could not afford to remain in New York a day longer. I could not *buy* a job there; I had tried it. I must return to Hillton, dispose of as much of my stuff as I could to secure a handful of rainy-day money, and look about for something to do.

CHAPTER II.

I FIND A LETTER.

I RETURNED to Hillton a vastly different Philip Valentine from the devil-may-care fellow that had kept the faculty awake o' nights. You may believe that I was sobered.

I tried not to carry my loss on my sleeve, and endeavored to act much as usual, but I'm afraid I made rather a miserable failure of it. That night after dinner as I sat in my room sucking moodily at my pipe Billy Armstrong slammed down the book he had been pretending to read and faced me.

"Come out of it, old horse," he said gruffly. "Did the little boy get spanked by his guardian? You're not taking the can that hard, are you? Stick around for a couple of weeks. This thing 'll blow over same as the

others. You got a good run for your money."

"It isn't that, Billy," I answered ruefully. "That was coming to me, I guess, and I'm not kicking. But just take a look at this."

I took a newspaper from the drawer, and, penciling the paragraph that had called me to New York, I tossed it over to him. He read it and then looked up at me with a puzzled frown.

"Did you know Steele?" he asked.

"Not very well. I wish I had now. He was my dad's partner in the real-estate game some years ago, but when dad died he went into Wall Street. Dad made him executor of his estate and named him as my guardian, you know. I saw the old crook only twice, I think."

"Well, what— You don't mean to say that—"

"Yep. I'm flat as a punctured tire. He used my money—every cent; and Stevenson, his partner, told me that there wasn't enough left to buy a shoe-string. He was deeply sorry, but he couldn't do a thing for me.

"I hired a lawyer, of course, to take care of my interests—a chap by the name of Felton who was handling the matter for the other creditors; but after a two days' wrangle he told me that there were no interests left to take care of.

"A reporter tipped me off that Steele's widow owned some property and he thought I might be able to get something out of her, but I wasn't fighting women. I was pretty sick of the whole darn business."

"You've been handed a raw deal and no mistake," said Billy. "It's a rotten mess. It's enough to take the wind out of any one's sails. I'm mighty sorry, old man."

Billy fell to pulling his lip nervously, while he paced thoughtfully up and down the room. Presently he halted beside my chair.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked soberly.

"Don't know. Haven't had the

nerve to think of that. Get a job of some kind somewhere, I guess. And that right sudden."

"Wait a while, old man. There's no hurry. This is a blamed hard year. Dad told me the other day that he had to lay off some of his office force. Business is all shot to pieces. No work. Everything's tight as a drum. Better stick around here until things open up in the spring. It'll only be a month or two."

"Nope. Much obliged, Billy, but I can't. I'd simply be postponing the inevitable, and it'd make it a darn sight harder to break in when I had to. My colt days are over, and the sooner I get into running-harness the better it will be for me."

"But, man, what will you do?" Billy spoke with a trace of exasperation in his voice. "You'd better wait until dad has some opening. I tell you—"

And then he launched forth into a persuasive argument that almost shook my resolution.

Billy was a good fellow—none better; but I knew that traveling with the old crowd cost money, and I had none to spend. I wasn't a "shorthorn" and I didn't have the brass to borrow without having a good prospect of repaying the loan. I must strike out for myself now. Sink or swim, I must.

But where?

Business was dead in the East. It might be better in the West or down South. I had a hazy notion of heading for one or the other direction.

So early the next morning I acted on my resolution. I disposed of my six-cylinder Desplaines at a ridiculously low figure and paid my outstanding obligations with the proceeds. Then whatever possessions I didn't need I sold or gave away, and began packing the rest of my stuff.

It was on the morning of the second day following my return from New York that I came upon Uncle Caspar's letter. It had lain in a drawer of my desk for about two months. With a

hot flush of shame I remembered that I had neglected to answer it. I don't recall now what had cropped up to make me overlook it, but the fact was that I had forgotten both it and him entirely. I read the letter aloud to Billy:

"CHICAGO, Illinois, December 12.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW:

"You will no doubt be surprised to receive this note from one whom, I dare say, you scarcely knew was among the living. You will probably not remember much of your Uncle Caspar, since at my last visit to your father you were but nine years old.

"I was abroad for a number of years after that, and when upon my return I learned of the untimely demise of my poor brother some years previously I need not say that I was deeply touched. I wanted to look you up, but I was taken sick suddenly and had to leave for Florida.

"When I had fully recovered business affairs occupied my mind to the exclusion of everything else, and I did not think of you again until a happy accident brought your name before me this minute.

"I've done pretty well in a financial way, but success does not compensate me, now that I feel I'm growing older, for the lack of youthful companionship I might have enjoyed. My daughter, Fern, expects to be with me during the Christmas recess, and I wish that if you can possibly arrange it you will come to Chicago to pay us a long visit.

"Arrange to come, dear boy. Don't say no. An old man will be keenly disappointed if you do. Send me a telegram that I may be at the station to meet you.

"Come!

"Your affectionate uncle,

"CASPAR VALENTINE.

"274 Doonby Street."

"Poor old guy! And I never answered it!" I said as I refolded the letter and put it back into its envelope. "Isn't that a dirty shame? I ought to be kicked from here to Madagascar!"

"You bet! And back again," was Billy's hearty indorsement of my sentiments. "I didn't know you had an uncle. In fact I thought you were the only one of the Valentine clan living."

"I thought so, too, until I received this letter.

"Of course," I hastened to qualify, "I had heard about Uncle Caspar Valentine when I was a kid at home, and I dimly remember seeing him on the occasion he mentions. At that time he was an engraver in the government service, I think.

"Dad never had much to do with him. I don't know why. I imagine he was a little wild. He can't be more than forty-five or fifty now.

"And his daughter! That's more news to me. Ah—er—Fern's a right, nice name—unusual; don't you think?"

Billy looked at me quizzically for a full minute and then a broad grin of amusement widened his mouth.

"Heh! Heh! Huh! Arrgh!" he finished as his head stopped the book I hurled at him. "Ouch! Cut it out. Excuse me. She may be as homely as a garret for all you know. But seriously, Phil, d'you intend to look him up?"

"Sure thing. He may put me hep to a good position. And why shouldn't I? Lord knows I never needed him more than now. And he'll be tickled to death to see me. Blame shame I was so darned careless. But I guess he'll understand.

"Billy, be a good scout and get me a Pennsy time-table. I leave for Chicago to-morrow and I want to get this packing finished."

I worked until a late hour that night, packing my trunk between spells of shaking good-by with the fellows, who had dropped in when Billy told them of my intentions. I sent a telegram to my uncle, advising him of my coming and asking whether it would be convenient for him to have me. He replied promptly that it would.

"So-long, old horse," Billy said when we parted. "Lemme know how things go. I'll hold your trunk till you give the word. And—well, darn it, Phil, you know what you'd want me to do if I were hard up. Luck!"

"By, Billy. Be good to yourself!"

I am not ashamed to say that a lump

as big as a man's doubled fist was in my throat and would not down as I turned away.

CHAPTER III.

MY UNCLE CASPAR.

I HAD expected to see a man of about forty-five, maybe a little grizzled about the temples from close application to business, but on the whole well set-up, ruddy-cheeked, with the air and general demeanor of a successful business man.

Father, though he loved me dearly, had never been very chummy with me. He himself had lived blamelessly and had been inclined to be too harsh in his judgment of those who were less scrupulous in their conduct.

I believed, therefore, that the breach which, I knew, existed between him and his brother, Uncle Caspar, before his death, had been due more to his strait-lacedness than to any vital shortcomings in Uncle Caspar's character. Uncle Caspar may have been a bit wild at the time, I surmised, but that was years ago. He had settled down long since; and now, I imagined, he was ripening into an easy, perhaps tolerant "old boy."

But instead of the jolly individual of my dreams there greeted me upon my arrival in Chicago a dour-faced, bushy-eyebrowed man, short in stature and of indeterminate age. His nose was thin and aggressive, but his chin was stubby and weak. Deep lines were in his sallow cheeks.

He looked sickly, yet the fingers that curled about mine in a grip of welcome were strong as steel, slender, tapering, capable. His voice harbored a suggestion of tubercular huskiness. His eyes, instead of holding mine when he talked, looked beyond me absently.

He didn't have much to say either at the station or on the drive to the house. He asked me about myself and spoke feelingly of my father, but his conversation was forced and strained.

For this I found a ready excuse. For years he had led a solitary, self-centered existence, never obliged to please any one but himself. Casual conversation was Greek to him. He had lost the art of being interested in anything but that which directly touched him or his business.

He tried hard to make himself agreeable and succeeded only in making me uncomfortable. I tried to help him strike the common note, but after a few floundering attempts I kept my mouth shut and leaned back against the cushions. He, too, was satisfied to lapse into silence and to stare out of the window.

From time to time, when he thought I wasn't looking, he darted curious, furtive glances at me. But when I turned to meet his gaze I found him looking out from under his heavy eyebrows at the houses passing in swift review alongside.

It wasn't a very happy beginning, I told myself ruefully.

We had long since left the business district and were now running smoothly between rows of old-fashioned flats and residences. Then came a gap of a block and a half and suddenly we entered a section of fresh-painted bungalows and cottages.

I looked out interestedly.

"McWilliams's Addition," remarked my uncle, indicating the cottages with a wave of his thin hand. "Hundred dollars down, balance same as rent. Good plan. He's making scads of money on it. Bought the land for a song, built the cottages cheaply, and is selling them to suckers on the easy-payment plan."

"Why suckers?" I asked.

"Oh, sooner or later the tenant fails to come across with the monthly instalment and — bingo! — out he goes. So Mac's always ahead.

"I had an interest in this but I sold out. Bought a piece o' property up here a way, and 'll build it up in the spring. I'll clean up a nice little bunch of money on the investment.

"Got a side-line, too, that looks good—kind of a hobby of mine," he went on, licking his lips and flashing a glance at me out of the tail of his eye.

"What's that?" I prompted.

"Well, strictly on the q. t., it's a process for the improvement of camera-films. Can't tell you much about it though till it's in better shape. May pan out big; may go—*blah!*"

He brushed it away with his hand.

"I know a little chemistry," I hesitated. "If I can help—"

"Don't want any help," he broke in with what I thought to be unnecessary heat. "Don't want any help from anybody. That's why I'm working on it in my own dark-room up in my own house; and nobody gets a look-in on that dark-room; not even Fern."

I flushed; a sharp rejoined was on the tip of my tongue, when abruptly he turned the conversation.

"There!" he pointed out of the window. "See this stretch of vacant property? Mine. From that corner way down to the lake. Those are some of the cottages we built last fall."

He pointed out a row of cottages on the other street with their backs toward us. They occupied half of the block. The half on the side toward us was bare, save for a broken line of weather-beaten billboards. In the middle of the block stood a gray stone house, a handsome place in its day no doubt, but now sadly run down and in crying need of repair. Heavy wooden shutters, unpainted for a decade, blocked the windows. Snow lay thick in the straggling gutters of the time-worn roof. As my eyes fell on the place, for some indefinable reason I felt a sinking of the heart, a presentiment of what was coming.

The cab jolted over the uneven surface of the road and veered in to the curb. My uncle touched my arm.

"Here we are," said he, affecting a tone of cheeriness. "Not much of a place, not pretentious; but it's quiet and comfortable and homelike. Very homelike; very!

"Bought it with the rest o' this property. Decided to move in so I could be right on the ground when I begin building-operations in the spring.

"Good enough for me. An old man doesn't want much. May move though because Fern's being with me makes a difference. Jump out!" he said briskly.

I sat rooted in my seat, scarcely believing that I heard aright. It was such a forsaken, gloomy spot! And the house looked so old that I could hardly believe it tenanted. Yet a curl of smoke was writhing down from the chimney.

Uncle Caspar paid the driver and took up my suit-cases. I was too stunned to think of them myself. He threw open a latticed-iron gate set in the stone wall that ran shoulder-high before the house.

It was near five o'clock and already growing dusk without, but the moment I trod upon the walk that led to the high steps of the porch the gloom seemed to deepen suddenly. It was as if the wall shut out every ray of light from the outside.

A wild tangle of lifeless shrubbery choked the angle of the wall and even encroached upon the walk, hindering free passage to the porch. Ashes had been sprinkled on the ice-coated steps; still the footing was treacherous.

To the left, three blocks or so away, the waves beat upon an ice-fringed, barren beach. To the right the billboard fence reeled drunkenly off toward the trim cottages. Here and there lights twinkled in the houses. They seemed very far away.

For the life of me I couldn't repress a nervous shiver as I waited for Uncle Casper to unlock and throw open the door. And as looked at him, stooping over to insert the key into the old-fashioned lock, by a queer quirk of fancy he seemed to me to fit with singular aptness into his surroundings.

He, too, seemed to carry the marks of life's vicissitudes. His face was as gray and cold as the wall beside him—and as unresponsive.

We stepped in. Uncle Caspar turned on the light.

We were in a huge hall, lighted by a dim incandescent set in the ceiling. A long flight of wide steps with a massive balustrade led to the upper floor.

Against the near wall stood a heavy hall-tree with hideously crooked arms. This was the only article of furniture in the gaping space.

"Put your hat and coat on the rack my boy," he called, his cold voice attempting geniality. "Any place at all. We got here just about the time I expected we would. Wonder where your cousin Fern is. I'll call her. Fern! Oh, Fern! What's become of that girl? She—Ah! Here she is."

A door on our left opened, sending in a path of brighter light. In the aperture appeared the figure of a girl. She wasn't tall, nor was she short; medium is not the word.

The light from behind filtering through her dark-brown hair made it seem alive with color. The finely chiseled, sensitive face below the tumbling mass of glorious hair appeared a little pale and drawn and had about it an air of frigid reserve that sent my already faint heart down to zero. Her eyes met mine without equivocation. Behind the cool appraisal in them I thought I read unreasoning antagonism.

I tried to explain it then on the ground of hypersensitive imagination—that my uncle's unsympathetic behavior had put me in the frame of mind to expect the same in the girl, and looking for that I saw it. And yet it was there; it was not wholly imagination on my part.

"Fern," said my uncle, shoving me forward, "shake hands with your cousin, Philip. I'm rather fortunate to have two young people about me now. We'll have jolly times together. Looks just like his father, and"—poking me slyly in the ribs—"and his father was a good-looking man. Have you ordered a fine dinner for us?"

The girl flashed a glance of impatience at her father and then turned to me. The faintest of smiles curled her lips. Her eyes seemed a trifle kinder. When she spoke her voice somehow reminded me of a rare day in spring—purling rivulets on sunny hillsides, clean, exhilarating breezes, buds bursting in the maples.

"I'm sure Mr. Valentine is very welcome," she said as she advanced and extended her hand for the briefest of handclasps. "Er—father, will you show Mr. Valentine to his room? Hannah 'll have dinner at the usual hour."

She bowed to me and turned as if to go.

I stammered some stupid acknowledgment and followed my host up the stairs with the uncomfortable feeling that my visit, at least as far as the girl was concerned, was not welcome.

By nature I am not at all backward or shy. I make friends easily. But here I ran against a blank wall of chill hostility, the more incomprehensible because it seemed so uncalled for.

Half-way up the stairs I happened to look back. Fern was still standing in the doorway, her face upturned to me. She caught my glance and swiftly retreated.

I felt a bit hurt, I confess. It was but natural that I should have expected some show of cordiality, even though it were perfunctory. But she had not even tried to be friendly.

Something more than constraint at meeting a stranger lay behind her reserved bearing, something akin to trouble, as if she did not know where to turn, and meanwhile was on her guard against any one who approached her.

My uncle ushered me into a room facing the stairway and turned on the light. I had been conscious of his side-long scrutiny as we ascended the stairs. Now he returned to the door, looked out to the stair-head, and came tiptoeing back. He gripped my arm and drew me farther into the room.

"Ah—er—" he said, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper, "you mustn't mind Fern. Poor child! Since her illness she's been a bit queer"—he tapped his forehead significantly—"and she imagines things.

"I've had the hardest time with her! Of all the things she's told me—the wildest, craziest things! Absolutely nothing to them, but I pretend to believe everything she says.

"The doctor advised us not to cross her. It would aggravate her condition. She'll get over it when she's a little stronger. You'll be patient with her; eh?"

With that he left me.

CHAPTER IV.

FERN THE MYSTERIOUS.

DINNER that night was a rather dreary affair. Uncle Caspar devoted himself religiously to his food, eating carefully for appearance's sake and at the same time trying to stow away as much as he could. The burden of the conversation fell upon me and I found it rather difficult to maintain it, for the girl made no effort to relieve the situation.

You may be sure that I watched keenly for any signs of the disorder my uncle had hinted at, but beyond Fern's obstinate refusal to be agreeable I discovered nothing that would bolster his statement. When at last the meal came to a close and we pushed back our chairs, I for one felt immeasurably relieved.

We adjourned to the library, a long, shadowy room paneled in fumed oak. Low bookcases surmounted by scattered statuettes ran along the inside wall. A heavy oaken table occupied the center of the room. The rug that covered the floor must have cost a pretty penny when new, but now it was badly worn and moth-eaten.

The only thing that saved the room from a pronounced dinginess was the huge colonial fireplace in the outside

wall. A fire had been kindled in it, and the cheerful flames leaping up the cavernous maw of the chimney supplied the touch of life that was so palpably absent in the other rooms of the house.

The dining-room had been cold—cold with the damp, insidious chill of dead air that lurks in old houses. Fern curled up in one of the roomy upholstered armchairs grouped about the fireplace, and, propping her chin on her doubled hand, stared meditatively into the coals. I dropped down into a chair on the other side and stretched out my feet toward the cheerful blaze. With a muttered word about the furnace, Uncle Caspar left the room.

The chair in which I sat was soft and yielding. A warm sense of comfort pervaded my being. Quite unconsciously my hand strayed to my breast-pocket in quest of a cigar. But there it halted as thought of the girl flashed across my mind.

She might detest the odor of cigar-smoke, particularly so since she had just passed through a long siege of sickness. Asking her permission would place her in an unfair position. She would not refuse even though it did annoy her.

So although every nerve in my body was crying out for a few delicious draws I dropped my hand to the armrest of the chair and resigned myself to abstinence.

I was uncomfortable, and I must have showed it. For when I stole a glance at the girl I found her regarding me with an amused smile. She broke into a delicious little gurgle of merriment, so spontaneous and unaffected that I could not help but laugh with her.

"Oh, excuse me!" she cried. "Excuse me! I'm very rude. But you looked so funny, so disappointed, that I couldn't help it. But really—go ahead and smoke if you want to. I don't mind it in the least. Really I don't. I like it."

The laugh cleared the atmosphere.

By the time I had my cigar glowing redly we were on the best of terms. The aloofness and restraint that had stuck out all over her a short time before dropped away. She expanded into an interested, animated friend.

Fern had been to a girls' college near Reading, Pennsylvania, it appeared. She came to Chicago shortly before Christmas, and had been under her father's roof scarcely two days when she was taken down with pneumonia. Her lips went white and actual horror was in her eyes as she mentioned simply that she had been abed for six weeks.

Six weeks! And in this gloomy house!

She evidently disliked to dwell on her experience, so I made haste to shift the subject. I told her of my father, and quite naturally I alluded to the first and only time I had seen Uncle Caspar.

And as I was talking to her she stiffened suddenly. The chilly mask of polite attention settled over her face. She became again the aloof person I had shaken hands with in the hall.

At that moment a sound from the door behind me attracted my attention. I turned in time to see Uncle Caspar retreating softly to the dining-room. How long he had been at the door I could not tell, but I shrewdly suspected that Fern's resumption of her chilly bearing coincided with his appearance. When I turned back to her I found her staring pensively at the fire.

And then Uncle Caspar reappeared, whistling weirdly under his breath.

"Hum, haw!" he yawned. "I've had a hard day. Aren't you folks sleepy? Guess I'll go to bed early to-night. What 've you been talking about?"

He came into the circle and stood with his back to the fire, hands clasped behind him, chin sunk on his chest, while his restless eyes darted from one to the other of us. Fern looked at me with raised eyebrows as if she wanted me to answer.

"Oh, everything and nothing," I answered. "I was telling her of father's early struggle in New York and of the one time I remember seeing you. I was a boy of nine then."

"Yes; I remember clearly the occasion. I happened to be in the city that day and I decided to look up Jason."

He cocked his head at Fern and said rather abruptly:

"Hadn't you better go to bed?"

Then as if to soften the command he added:

"It's beyond your usual hour, you know, and you don't want to abuse your strength."

Fern's lips tightened and a pink flush crept up to her curls. But instead of the sharp outburst I expected she shrugged her shoulders, settled down more snugly in her chair, and smiled unconcernedly up at him.

"Oh, no. I'm not at all tired. Besides, it's so comfortable here and so cold in my room that I prefer to remain. I'll read a while if you don't mind." She said this to me. "You people go right ahead and talk."

Uncle Caspar bit his lip and took a step forward, but checked himself in time. He laughed easily, though it cost him something to do it.

"Well, well! That proves you're no longer sick. She doesn't look ill; does she, Philip?"

She didn't. The pink flush was still in her cheeks. A triumphant glint shone in her eyes. She walked to the bookcase beside the fireplace and selected a volume from the shelf. Then with an inclusive nod of apology she resumed her seat and opened the book. And Uncle Caspar, with the set smile of a man biding his time to finish the incident, turned back to me and continued his remarks as if nothing had interrupted him.

"Yes, I do remember that visit very well. I was in New York to take the boat to Hamburg. You were living up in the Bronx in a little flat. It was two years after you'd lost your mother.

Your father was just beginning to get back on his feet. It has always been a comforting thought to me that I was able to help him out with a trifling loan of a few hundreds."

He looked reminiscently into the fire and was silent for the space of a minute.

"I don't suppose you remember much of it?" he added. "As you said, you were a kid of nine."

"No. It's all pretty vague," I said.

I lied when I said it, for I remembered the incident as clearly as if it had happened yesterday. The only justification I had for the lie was that it answered a lie.

Uncle Caspar lied when he said that he had advanced my father "a few hundreds." It was *he* that had borrowed of my father, and at a time too when father had need of every cent he could gather. And Uncle Caspar had never repaid the loan; of that I was sure, even though my father had never mentioned it.

We were living meanly at the time. Father had not yet recovered from the double blow of losing a hard-won fortune and a good wife all in the space of two years. But he could not deny the sick, shivering man that turned to him.

The barefaced twisting of fact sickened me. Any shreds of affection or respect for my uncle that still lurked in me died in that moment, and in their place there grew something akin to contempt.

I could not trust myself to continue the conversation, so I got up and after a silent interval rummaged about for something to read. I looked about for a newspaper or a recent magazine, but could find neither, so I had to content myself with one of the time-yellowed volumes.

I was the first to retire that night. I was tired, and the book I had taken up did not interest me. So I excused myself and went up to the room that had been assigned to me earlier in the evening.

For a long time after I had turned off my light I lay awake in the huge four-poster, my mind skipping erratically from one subject to the next. I had enough to think about.

Frankly, I was disappointed—tremendously disappointed. Things were not as I had expected them to be. Only a pillar or two of the radiant air-castles I had built still stood; the rest had tumbled ruthlessly about my ears.

In the first place I was disappointed in Uncle Caspar. From the letter I had received I had imagined him to be a man who was realizing that in his advancing years he had no youthful shoulders to lean upon, a man who was hungering for youthful companionship and who would welcome me with open arms.

I had imagined that it would naturally be hard for him, who had lived so long alone, to accustom himself to the constant presence of another, and I had made up my mind to be very considerate, self-effacing, sympathetically agreeable.

I had expected the writer of the letter to be a man of some education and refinement. But in all these particulars I had been wrong.

My uncle did not strike me as being the kind of a man to whom, as I had fondly hoped, I could open my heart, whom I could ask for advice and from whom I could accept assistance. I had acted on the spur of the moment in coming to him, with the romantic notion of "blood calling to blood" in the back part of my mind.

But after what I had seen and heard and felt that evening I found it hard to believe that this man with the lean, hungry face, the catlike eyes, and the silent, watchful manner was of the same flesh and blood as my father. I felt no kinship.

And as I found it hard to believe that Uncle Caspar was my father's brother, so too did I find it hard to believe that the girl could be bound to him by any ties of blood. He was an-

gularly built, with gray eyes, a thin mouth, high cheek-bones and retreating chin. She was rounded, pulsing with rich life; her eyes were a deep brown, and the lips above the defiantly tilted chin were soft and full.

And Fern did not fit in with these surroundings. She was like a delicate hot-house culture blooming on an ash-heap. Just as many little things indicated that Uncle Caspar was of coarser fiber than a superficial observer might estimate, so, too, little things in Fern's contradictory demeanor gave me glimpses of her true personality.

She was undeniably beautiful, and as tantalizing as she was beautiful. My mind jumped to Caspar Valentine's words about Fern in the room before dinner, and I pondered them for a long time.

As I lay there thinking there rang out the sharp cry of a woman in pain or anger. I had been conscious in a dreamy sort of way of two people coming up the stairs and then of a long-continued, low-voiced mumbling at the far end of the hall, but now this sudden cry jarred me wide awake.

I raised up on my elbow and listened. For a moment there was absolute silence. Then I thought I heard a sibilant whisper and the sound of a door being closed and locked. Then a *phut! phut!* as if some one were tiptoeing toward my door. There the person halted for a moment and then continued on up the hall.

A door closed softly. Nothing more, though I strained my ears and held my breath in an agony of listening.

I dropped back to my pillow. An hour later, just as the clock in the lower hall struck the half-hour after twelve, I got up and slipped into my bathrobe. I had not been able to fall asleep, and I thought that a glass of hot water might help me.

The bathroom was at the far end of the hall. I had opened my door and was feeling along the wall for the switch when from a room ahead of

me and on the opposite side of the hall there came a half-smothered snuffle as of some one crying into a pillow. I stepped back into my room, closed the door noiselessly, and went back to bed without the drink.

The incident strangely concerned me. Who was crying? Why? What had happened?

A dozen answers trooped before me, but none seemed to fit. Something was decidedly wrong in this old house. There was a tension in the air, a couchant atmosphere hard to resolve. It pervaded every room. I had felt it the moment I stepped within the area-wall. That feeling had been with me ever since!

I had not been conscious of so doing, but now I realized that I had been holding myself on the defensive as if against some lurking danger.

What should I do?

Should I follow my inclination and leave my uncle's house the next morning?

What would I do then? Seek a position by myself?

That would be foolhardy. Uncle Caspar had business associates who would no doubt be glad to find or even make some opening for me. I didn't much fancy working under Uncle Caspar, and I would not lie around doing nothing even if he wanted me to.

I could accept the favor of his influence exerted in my behalf toward the securing of a position without feeling too much in his debt. I felt that he owed me that much for the "few hundreds" he had borrowed from my father and had neglected to repay.

And thus thinking, I rolled over on my side and fell into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCING PITTSBURGH.

WHEN I came down to breakfast in the morning I found Caspar Valentine impatiently awaiting me in the dining-room. I was informed that

Fern complained of a severe headache and asked to be excused. So Uncle Caspar and I breakfasted alone.

He maintained his usual silence; that is, he answered my questions in monosyllables and ventured nothing on his own account. He had a disgusting habit of rapping smartly upon his glass with the blade of his knife whenever he wished his coffee-cup refilled. And then when the housekeeper entered from the kitchen he would growl out: "Coffee! Toast!" or whatever it was he wanted.

The housekeeper was a rather stupid-faced and sullen-looking woman, whose hair was drawn back in a tight knot on her head. Her lips were thin and not wide, and most of the time she kept them tightly buttoned.

She moved about between the table and the kitchen with the stolid, methodic shuffle of a trained behemoth and seemed entirely unconscious of everything but her work.

When Uncle Caspar had drained his last cup of coffee, had wiped his face in his napkin and scraped back his chair with a deep sigh of satisfaction, I ventured:

"I rather think I'll go down-town this morning. There are some things I want, and I might as well go now as later."

Uncle Caspar looked at me a full minute. I saw that he did not take to the suggestion.

"Is it absolutely necessary? What d'you want to get? It's cold as sin outside. You'd better stay in. Hannah'll get anything you want when she goes down-town. She's going this afternoon."

"I think I'd better go myself," I retorted.

For some reason or other, obscure to me then, he did not want me to leave the house. But I simply had to get out! My lungs were crying for a breath of fresh, clean air.

The depressing atmosphere of the place acted on me like a drug. It made me feel sluggish, dead-brained. I

wanted to shake off the feeling of having eyes upon my back whenever I took a step. I wanted to walk my legs off. I wanted to think.

I didn't tell him this. I made some lame remark about buying a couple of shirts and going to the post-office for mail.

"I had intended to go down-town this afternoon myself, and I could do that for you—" he began.

But when he saw the obstinate set of my jaw, he switched.

"Still, if you want to go this morning, I'll go with you. We'll make a day of it. Come on!"

What could I do? I had to accept his company with as decent grace as I could muster. It was better anyway than to remain there in the dank house. And so we set out, Uncle Caspar swathing himself in the same muffler he had worn when he met me at the station.

Fern had not appeared when we left the house.

It was late in the afternoon, and we were on the point of returning home after a round of sightseeing that had killed our day, when we entered the Northwestern Terminal. Uncle Caspar left me for a moment. I walked up and down the spacious corridor to await his return.

I had not long to wait. Very shortly I descried him hurrying toward me through the crowd of suburbanites that swarmed up the stairs to their trains.

His overcoat was open. He was cramming a handful of cigars into the breast-pocket of his coat. His muffler had slipped down.

He was so intent upon his task that he hurried past me without seeing me. I was about to call out to him when a stranger who had been following several paces behind quickened his steps and touched my uncle familiarly on the shoulder.

Uncle Caspar wheeled; if ever I saw stark, surprised fear leap out of a man's white face it was on his.

The two eyed each other. The

stranger wore a down-at-the-heels spring suit, a green-black derby hat, and a seedy-looking overcoat. A week's stubble of red beard bristled on his chin. There were hollows in his coarse-grained cheeks.

Though you could not call him lean, he bore the hungry look of an alley-dog. And like an alley-dog he was looking at Uncle Caspar, uncertain whether his reception would be cordial or the reverse.

He was not left in doubt for long. A fierce rush of angry blood mounted in Uncle Caspar's sallow cheeks. His eyes fairly sparkled with murderous anger.

"Arrgh!" he snarled. "Wadya mean by that? Wadya mean? For ten cents I'd knock your ugly block off. Wadya want?"

He seized the stranger by the arm and thrust his chin up close to the other's. For all the stranger's height—he was half a head taller than Uncle Caspar—he fell back before that withering glare. The half-formed propitiatory grin faded from his lips.

"Aw, don't get touchy, colonel. I didn't mean nothin'. Can't ya take a joke?" he said, retreating and rubbing his arm aggrievedly.

"If that's a joke, it's a blamed poor one!" retorted Uncle Caspar, refusing to be mollified by the other's apologetic tone. "Wadya want anyhow, Pittsburgh?" he persisted.

"I'm flat, colonel. Haven't a red. Can't ya stake me to a couple o' bones? Haven't had a decent chow in a coon's age."

Uncle Caspar did not reply immediately. He darted quick glances up and down the corridor; then, taking Pittsburgh by the arm, he stepped closer to the check-room and farther away from the stairway and its moving load of commuters.

He did not see me. I was standing in the shelter of one of the massive pillars.

When I peeped out from behind it again Uncle Caspar and the seedy-

looking stranger had withdrawn out of earshot. The stranger had his thumb and finger in Uncle Caspar's coat-lapel; from the earnest look on his face I imagined that he was furthering his plea.

I saw Uncle Caspar thrust his hand into his pocket and draw forth a bank-note. He held it out to Pittsburgh, but the latter shook his head decidedly while a contemptuous grin twisted his lips. I was surprised, for from where I was the bill appeared to be a yellow-back—a ten or twenty at least!

Uncle Caspar gave a shrug of impatience and returned the bill to his pocket. Then he dived into his trousers, and I saw him pass two bills to Pittsburgh. I could not determine their denomination, for Pittsburgh snatched at them with greedy fingers. He spread them out on his hand, kissed them foolishly, and deposited them carefully in his vest.

Then he began pleading again, gripping Uncle Caspar's coat-lapel in his earnestness. But Uncle Caspar preserved a stony silence.

And when Pittsburgh persisted in his wheedling the color crept up behind my uncle's ears again. He snapped out something—what I could not tell—and pushed Pittsburgh impatiently out of his way. But Pittsburgh followed him.

"Nope! Nothing doing. Get out. I'm through with you—*through!* D'you hear me?" he shouted, loud enough for me to hear.

He turned his back with chill finality on the hungry-looking man and walked off. The fellow grinned sardonically and looked after him for a speculative moment. Then he took the bills from his pocket, gazed at them gloatingly, put them back, shrugged his shoulders, and, hands in pockets, stepped jauntily to the main exit.

I felt rather guilty. I had peeped into something that did not concern me. It would be no less embarrassing to me than to Uncle Caspar if he knew that I had observed his encoun-

ter with this down-at-the-heels character. By the time I gathered my wits Uncle Caspar was about ten yards distant, making for the baggage-room, looking this way and that for me. I sprinted lightly to the steps leading up to the train-shed platforms and made three in one jump. Then I turned and faced downward as if I were in the act of descending.

Uncle Caspar had stopped and was looking about for me. I waved my hand to attract his attention. He caught sight of me almost immediately and came hurrying toward me. I slowly descended.

"Been looking for you all over. Where you been?" he asked with a touch of irritation.

"Just coming down," I evaded, motioning to the upper floor. "I thought you'd be gone longer."

"Humph!"

He cast a sidelong glance at me from his slate-gray eyes as we made our way to the front exit; but I was looking straight ahead with a face as innocent as a child's.

We walked briskly down Madison Street, Uncle Caspar maintaining a sullen silence. Twice in the block beyond the bridge he looked back over his shoulder, and after each time he hurried me along a little faster. And then as we came up to the La Salle Hotel he darted inside, hurried through the lobby, and out through the east door.

A row of taxis stood beside the curb. He dived into the nearest, dragged me in beside him, and called out a direction to the driver.

"What's your hurry?" I cried, grasping my uncle's arm as the cab lurched around the corner. "What's the matter?"

He paid no attention to my question. Impatiently he shook his arm free and raised up to look through the slit behind. After a moment he sat down and chuckled throatily:

"Pretty easy, I guess; pretty easy! D'you get the idea?"

"The idea? No. What—"

"Why we piled into this cab? Didn't you see any one follow us? No? Well, I met a darned rat in the station who's always touched me for money. Did me a good turn once and has been presuming on it ever since. We ditched him all right, I guess."

He was not certain about the correctness of the last, however. He looked back several times, and then, tapping on the glass in front, he ordered the chauffeur to turn now this corner and now that, doubling on his trail constantly, until I was so confused that I did not know whether we were heading north, east, south, or west; and when at length the cab jolted to a stop I was surprised to find that we were before the old house on Doonby Street.

It was past six o'clock, so I went up to my room immediately to get ready for dinner.

While I was washing up there were plenty of things to occupy my mind. The more I saw of Uncle Caspar the more reluctant I was to ask him for assistance. Apparently he was no longer actively engaged in the real-estate business, despite his assertion of what he would do in the spring. He had no down-town office, had not even a telephone in the house, had not introduced me to any one of his business associates—though I had thrown out several hints that I'd like to meet some—and on the whole seemed to have nothing to do.

Of course I knew that during the winter months real estate moves slowly, but even so it seemed to me that he would have had enough to do to keep himself busy. If he really meant what he said about opening a subdivision in spring, there might be an excellent chance for me.

But I couldn't wait for that to materialize. I had to get busy immediately. The thinness of my pocket-book warned me that I could not afford to loaf. I seemed as far from securing a position now as I was when

I left New York City to return to Hillton.

Several times in the course of the afternoon I had been on the point of telling my uncle of my financial condition, but each time something checked my confidence before it was uttered. I hadn't even told him of my expulsion from Hillton College! I didn't know how he would take that. What he—

I got this far in my cogitations when a light rustle of silk outside my door apprised me that Fern was going down to dinner. I had not seen her since the evening before, when she had nodded an absent good night. Then she had cloaked herself in the baffling mantle of aloofness. I wondered whether the day had worked any change in her attitude, and, anxious to find out, I hurried my dinner preparations. She was alone in the library when I entered.

"You're feeling better now, I hope," I ventured. "Uncle told me that you had a splitting headache."

"I've quite recovered, thank you," she replied, turning from the window. "Thank you so much for the flowers. They're the first I've seen in weeks. They've made my room livable to-day. Thank you!"

She extended her hand frankly. I blushed like a schoolboy.

"Glad you liked them," I stammered.

And then as my eye fell on the single rose she wore at her belt I plucked up courage to say:

"I'm glad you're rid of something more than the headache!"

Her eyebrows puckered in perplexity. She regarded me questioningly. Then her face cleared. She broke into a smile with a little backward toss of her head.

"The other is gone, and I too am glad," she answered.

Then with fine irrelevance:

"Hadn't we better go into dinner? It's late. Hannah 'll have a fit if we keep her waiting much longer."

She tripped off. I followed, feeling almost at home. At the door, just before entering the dining-room, she leaned back and whispered to me over her shoulder:

"You're not a bit like your uncle!"

And she said it as if she were glad.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHARMERS.

UNCLE CASPAR had been waiting for us. From the look on his face I imagined he had not enjoyed the wait. Fern shrugged her shoulders and seated herself without answering his grunted salutation.

She crimsoned, however, and her breathing became noticeably tighter. And abruptly her face settled into the strained lines so pronounced the night before.

Conversation lagged; yet the air was electric with unspoken thoughts as if each single brain were buzzing away at some problem that touched all. Toward the close of the meal Fern made a remark that opened the door to my confession of the discipline meted out to me by the faculty. Quite naturally our talk had veered to college subjects.

"This is your fourth year, isn't it?" Fern asked.

"H-m, h-m," I murmured, my eyes on my plate.

"Then you'll be graduated this June?"

I laughed embarrassedly.

"I guess so. I would have been if I had stayed."

Uncle Caspar pricked up his ears at this.

"If you had stayed? What do you mean?" continued Fern.

"I'm not going back," I stated bluntly.

Fern's eyes opened wide in surprise. She drew back a little and rested her hands on the table.

"Pray, why not? You surely don't mean to say that you've quit?"

I felt my ears reddening under the direct scrutiny of the brown eyes. It was rather an uncomfortable situation. But my confession was bound to be made at some time, and this was as good as any.

Uncle Caspar held his cup half-way to his lips as he waited with patient interest for my answer. I took the plunge.

"No," I said, finding it easier to address myself to Fern than to my uncle. "Not of my own will. I'm not quitting the college; the college has—er—sort of quit me. They canned me, you see!"

"Canned you!" gasped my fair inquisitor. "Sent you home? Dismissed you?"

I nodded in sober affirmation.

Uncle Caspar looked from one to the other of us as if he were making sure that he had heard aright. He did not seem displeased. In fact he appeared to derive some subtle satisfaction from the information. A grin spread over his lean face. He set down his cup and chuckled throatily.

"Tied a can to you, hey? What for? What'd you been up to, you young scamp?"

I told him exactly how it had come about without seeking to excuse myself in the least. As he listened his face wore a veneer of sympathetic tolerance, but away back in his eyes I read a strange combination of sneering incredulity and gloating satisfaction. And that almost made me hate the man!

When I had finished he cleared his throat and leaned toward me confidentially. His voice was kind as a father's.

"You've made a kinda mess of it, I'm afraid, Philip; but there's no use in cryin' over spilled milk. Every youngster sows a batch o' wild oats. I did, and I wouldn't give a continental for the kid that didn't.

"You're not thinking of going back next year, are you? I wouldn't. 'Tain't worth while. You'll find that a year more or less of college-dope doesn't cut

any ice in the business world. No; the thing for you to do right now is to get busy.

"Do something! Be somebody! You'll be twenty-one in a couple o' weeks and it's about time that you were thinking of making your mark. You're more fortunate than most young fellows. You have the money to go into big things. And the big things mean big profits.

"There isn't a better place for a young man to put his money and make it work for him than right here in Chicago. Chicago is the fastest growing city in the world and just ripe for realty speculation.

"Look at me! If I had kept my money in the bank and let it draw a measly four or five or six per cent I wouldn't be anywhere. But I put my first thousand dollars into lake-shore property and—well, you see what I have now.

"I started in three years ago with little more than a thousand dollars. Three years! Yes, sir! That was shortly after Fern's mother, my good wife—"

He gulped down a lump that rose in his throat and dropped his eyes to the cloth. It was some time before he regained control of his voice, and when he looked up at me again he blinked his eyes to clear them.

"It was hard to lose her so suddenly," he said simply.

I felt singularly sorry for him, and heartily ashamed of myself for the mean thoughts about him that had filled my mind a little time before. He had his faults; I had mine. There might be something about me that he did not like. I had no business to judge him.

And so I gave him my respectful attention. A talking-streak seemed to possess him. On other occasions and on other topics he had had little to say, but now that he was launched on a recital of his achievements he became fairly eloquent.

He spoke with the earnestness and

burning conviction of a man that has experienced much. Under my eyes he built up the structure of his successes.

Several times he had been on the verge of ruin, and each time pluck and dogged stick-to-itiveness had pulled him through to larger gains than he had originally thought possible.

His story, it seemed, paralleled that of most of our present-day captains of finance. There was nothing unusual about it. Enterprise, perseverance, indomitable courage—these had been the building-blocks. Success was attained only by the man who saw his opportunity and was not afraid to reach out and seize it.

That was what Uncle Caspar had done. And with him at my shoulder to advise and direct me I could do as much as he! This was the tenor of his speech.

It did not enter my mind to think he was exaggerating. I believed him implicitly. I could not have doubted him even if I had wanted to. His eyes, which before had struck me as being the strongest of his features, leaped out at me, emanated white-hot streaks of conviction, compelled me to believe. There was a power behind them that held me fascinated, that rendered me incapable of independent thought or action.

I was hypnotized, I think, by the sheaf of figurative bank-notes held temptingly in the tightly clenched, thin hand before my face. I could not remove my gaze from them.

Semiconsciously I felt the girl's foot beating a rapid, insistent tattoo upon mine below the table. It annoyed me. I tried to turn my head to look at her, but I couldn't. My head was held as in a vise. My arms too, seemed tightly bound to my sides, my hands locked together.

I made a supreme effort to free myself. I shut my ears to Uncle Caspar's talk. I concentrated on my hands. And suddenly they flew apart. The right knocked against my water-glass and sent it to the floor.

Simultaneously with the crash of shattered glass there rang through the house the brazen summons of the front-door bell. The two sounds, breaking in so suddenly, startled all of us.

Fern jumped in her chair. Uncle Caspar stopped short in the middle of a sentence. He turned around swiftly and looked over his shoulder toward the hall door. His face was white as the table-cloth, his lips were drawn back from his teeth like those of startled animal. I felt suddenly re-taxed, as if I had been under a tremendous strain.

Uncle Caspar got up and moved to the kitchen door.

"Hannah! Hannah!" he called.

When she came up he said something to her in an undertone. She nodded and moved off to the front door. The bell jangled again discordantly.

"I'm not at home, understand; not at home to any one," he called after her.

He remained standing at the kitchen door, his head bent a little to one side as if he were listening intently.

I heard the snap of the light-switch, the sound of the belt slipping back, and the creak of the hinges as Hannah opened the door a crack. There followed the growl of a man's voice and the housekeeper's sharp falsetto.

Then the door closed with a bang. The housekeeper's heavy feet pounded across the rug of the other room. A second later she brushed between the portières, her face stamped with a look of mingled fright and anger.

"It's—" she began, and then threw back her hand in an eloquent gesture.

Behind her the portières parted and from the dark living-room stepped Pittsburgh, the fellow who had accosted my uncle in the Northwestern Terminal that afternoon.

He stood there, steadying himself by holding to the portières with one hand. With the other he brushed the snow from his shoulders.

None of us spoke. An angry red rose slowly up in Uncle Caspar's cheeks

and spread over to his temples. Pittsburgh did not seem to notice it.

He was glancing in frank curiosity from the girl to me as if our presence had somewhat taken him by surprise. Presently he shrugged his shoulders and grinned foolishly.

"No call t' get sore, colonel. Don't blame her," he said, intercepting the look of ferocious accusation Uncle Caspar darted at the housekeeper, who was standing at the library door nervously twisting her apron around both her pudgy forearms.

"She didn't let me in; I just came in in that easy way o' mine, you know. Cold outside.

"Heh, heh, heh! Thought you'd given me the go-by when you hopped into the buzz-wagon, eh? S'prised at you; yeh! I'm s'prised. You can't shake me that way. Got the number o' the cab an' waited till it came back.

"Head on me; eh? Nice warm house you have, colonel, I don't think! Yeh, thanks! B'lieve I will take off my coat!"

Throughout this monologue his half-sober eyes had flickered humorously from face to face. He had shaved since afternoon and had put on a fresh collar and shirt.

He was not at all bad-looking. Indeed, had it not been for the deep lines of dissipation about his mouth and the hard glitter in his eyes one might almost have called him handsome.

He had a devil-may-care, reckless air about him that made you like him in spite of yourself. Just now he dominated the room with an impudent assurance and self-sufficient ease that brought a smile to my lips.

At a savage nod from Uncle Caspar the housekeeper had sidled into the kitchen. The hot flush still ebbed and rose behind my uncle's ears. He was holding himself in check with difficulty. Now, as Pittsburgh divested himself of his threadbare overcoat and laid it negligently across the back of a chair. Uncle Caspar forced a wintry smile, evidently having decided to make the

best of a disagreeable situation. He took a step forward.

"Humph!" he grunted, still wearing his icy smile. "You always did the unexpected. Unholy hour for you to butt in on a man. Why didn't you wait till midnight? Well, I guess I can give you a few minutes."

He grasped Pittsburgh by the sleeve—tightly it seemed to me—and drew him toward the door leading into the hall. But Pittsburgh planted himself solidly on his feet and refused to budge.

"No' so fast! No' so fast, colonel!" he protested. "Int'duce me to th' children. Didn't know you had a family," he added, looking at Fern, who met his bold gaze with frigid composure not unmixed with pained disgust.

Uncle Caspar's eyes snapped and his lips closed tightly. Then as if he thought it policy to humor the man he turned to us.

"Fern and Philip, this is Mr.—"

He hesitated a half second.

"Dexter, colonel. Give the right monniker," interposed the other. "Friends call me Pittsburgh. Rather y'd call me Pittsburgh. Answer to both."

He winked elaborately at Fern, waved his hand to me, and allowed himself to be led from the room.

For a full minute after the pair had departed Fern and I looked at each other wonderingly. Through the hall the murmur of voices reached us, Uncle Caspar's thin with anger, the stranger's thickly protesting. I suppose both of us were trying to catch what was being said.

"Queer customer, eh?" I remarked presently.

"Queer! Well, rather! I can't understand it; can you? Did you notice father's face? If any one had come into my house like that I'd have thrown him out. But father couldn't afford to be rough with him. He—he wanted to, but he didn't dare. All the time that fellow was talking father was on pins and needles for fear he'd blurt

out something 'we shouldn't hear. Didn't it strike you that way?"

"It did," I agreed.

"I wonder what he wants," mused Fern. "Who is he?"

"I don't know," I told her. "Uncle met him this afternoon in the North-western Terminal."

The words were out of my mouth before I realized that I was peddling tales out of school.

"This afternoon? Tell me about it," she commanded.

"Oh, it was nothing. Uncle Caspar happened to run into him and he touched him for some money. The fellow has come out for more, I guess."

Fern's brows wrinkled in perplexed thought. She rested her chin on her folded hands and for a long stretch regarded me unwinkingly.

Her eyes seemed to probe deep down into me, searching my innermost being. I was relieved when the critical examination was over. She gave a satisfied sigh and leaned toward me.

She was about to speak when from behind the kitchen door there sounded the creak of shoe-leather. I had been dimly aware that the door was swaying slightly while we were talking. Now I had no doubt but that the house-keeper was standing on the other side with her ear glued to the crack.

Fern's eyes rested on the door a moment. Then she rose to her feet and motioned silently for me to follow.

We passed out into the library. Hannah had kindled a fire in the roomy hearth, and the warm, rich light that streamed out from it pulsed a compelling invitation.

Fern curled up in a chair. I lighted a cigarette and leaned against the mantel, soaking in the grateful warmth.

It had not been warm in the dining-room, despite the fact that the register had been sending forth a hot blast from the furnace. Indeed, it seemed that the gray, stone walls of the old house were so permeated with chilly damp that nothing could ever warm them. From them there descended a blanket of cold

that seeped through clothing and skin to a man's marrow. It was a dead house. Only before the fireplace was there life.

Presently Fern looked up from her abstracted contemplation of the dancing flames. Her face bore a look of high resolve, and when she spoke, it was slowly and carefully.

"There is much about this, and about everything here, that I don't understand. Somehow since you came I've been obsessed by a queer feeling of something impending — something not nice.

"You may think it's a case of nerves. Maybe it is, but I wouldn't feel right in my mind if I didn't act upon that — that — that premonition. Believe me that what I'm about to say is not easy or pleasant for me."

She paused a moment as if seeking feverishly for the right words. Then she clasped her little hands and bent toward me earnestly.

"Don't trust your uncle too completely. You don't know anything about him. Don't sink your money into any of his glittering schemes before you've investigated thoroughly. I don't know if he was telling the truth to-night. Oh, do be careful! Don't—"

"Please don't worry about me and my fortune," I broke in. "It's not at all impossible that I would have given a good exhibition of the fool and his money. But I can't do it now. My fortune *was*—not *is*! My guardian is responsible for that. He beat the other grafters to it."

The girl gasped.

"What do you mean? Surely you— Did he—"

"Yes, he did—rather!" I said bitterly. "My guardian, Augustus Steele, was dad's partner back in the later years of dad's life—real estate, loans, and all that sort of thing. When dad died—in 1904—he left an estate valued at about two hundred thousand dollars, most of which was in gilt-edged, negotiable securities. I was then a kid of fifteen."

I paused. In my mind's eye I again saw myself going up to New York from the prep-school that crisp spring morning in answer to Augustus Steele's telegram which — alas! — reached me too late—and later of driving out to the cemetery and standing at the graveside with the arm of my father's closest friend, Augustus Steele, thrown comfortingly about my shoulders. And I remembered how good it seemed to feel his hand about mine when we turned away.

"Dad trusted him," I continued. "He named him my guardian and his executor and I never bothered my head about my finances. I thought they were in good hands. It's another case of misplaced confidence and I'm the unlucky victim.

"Steele began to dabble in stocks. He lost, and to cover his losses he used my money. When the crash came he didn't have the nerve to face the music. On Thursday morning, two weeks ago, his partner, Stevenson, came down to the office to find him sitting at his desk with a bullet-hole in his head. Suicide, of course.

"I read about it in the paper and took the first train to New York. I had a suspicion of what had happened. And when I arrived there things were worse than I had anticipated. I hadn't a rag left. Stevenson went through Steele's accounts with me, his personal accounts found in his drawer, and later went over them with an outside lawyer I had engaged; but we couldn't save a nickel.

"Poor Stevenson was all broken up, as you can imagine. He tried to do everything for me. He even offered a loan, but of course I couldn't take it.

"Steele had worked his stock-deals under another name. I wasn't the only sucker. He— But it's too long a tale to go into now; and it makes me see red when I think of it."

Beyond a half-audible "oh!" of sympathy Fern had made no comment. She sat back in her chair. Her deep-brown eyes looked steadily up at

me, mutely sympathetic. Now she drew a deep sigh.

Her lips parted to ask the same question Billy Armstrong had asked of me when I returned heart-sick to Hillton: "What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know. Work, I suppose. But I'm in no worse fix than my dad was when he was married. He must have worked like a slave, for when I was six he was pretty well-to-do. Then the next year he lost almost everything he had.

"The blow killed my mother, I think. Dad didn't do much the year after she died. He made a bare living for himself and me. But little by little he got back into his old stride. He shipped me off to school and plunged heels over head into business.

"He made money, scads of it, but he killed himself making it. He kept to himself pretty much. Steele was the only man he confided in at all; and this is what came of it!"

"Oh, isn't it terrible to think that one can trust nobody nowadays?" Fern exclaimed feelingly. "It seems as if the world is just turned upside down; that the old quip, 'Do others before they do you,' is the guiding business maxim. This is a pretty selfish earth after all."

"Let's hope it isn't as bad as we think it is. Most men are honest, I guess. Yes, they must be, else everybody'd be packing a gun. I don't feel so sore about the money now. It isn't as if I'd held it in my hands and then been robbed of it. I'm on my feet now. I'll simply have to do what dad and hundreds of other men have done; and I'm inclined to think I'll enjoy it."

I flipped my half-consumed cigarette into the coals and watched it flame up and melt into the fire. For what seemed a long period both of us were silent. Presently Fern stirred and leaned toward me.

"I'm sure you'll succeed. They can't keep a good man down, you know."

She smiled confidently up at me and in that instant nothing seemed impossible of achievement. A million a minute seemed a normal pace.

"Thanks!" I said simply.

I wanted to say more. I wanted to tell her how much I appreciated her good opinion of me, and how hard I'd work to justify it; but just then the words would not come. Silence held us again, but it was not an uncomfortable silence.

"I acted on the spur of the moment in coming here," I ventured finally. I told her of Uncle Caspar's letter. "I thought my uncle could put me in the way of something," I continued. "I should have told him immediately of my position, I suppose, but somehow I haven't had the nerve. Queer, isn't it? But I've no right to be wasting time. I must get busy. I'll tell Uncle Caspar first thing in the morning. D'you think he could give me a line on something?"

"I—I—I rather—I'm sure I don't know," Fern stammered.

She colored painfully and compressed her lips. Her slipper beat a nervous tattoo on the rug. I looked at her without appearing to do so. She raised her lashes and glanced at me, and several times opened her lips as if to speak, but each time she closed them again and remained silent.

The hall clock droned eleven. Caspar and Pittsburgh were still in the parlor. The confused mumble of their voices came to us occasionally. I wondered what they were discussing, and I pondered over Fern's remark about Uncle Caspar's attitude toward the red-faced, easy stranger.

Pittsburgh's appearance had been palpably unwelcome. I could see that with half an eye. And, as Fern had said, Uncle Caspar would have thrown out the intruder bodily had he not been restrained by something more formidable than the stranger's bulk. What that something was, was beyond me to determine. Some shady deal or other into which he had entered in a moment

of weakness, no doubt, I decided. Anyway, it was no concern of mine.

"I'm very stupid, in spite of the fact that I've slept all morning," said Fern presently, patting her lips to stifle a yawn. She got to her feet. "I think I'll say good night. Thank you again for the flowers and—and—I wish I could do something to help you in the—in your struggle. Good night."

She extended her hand with winning impulsiveness.

I gripped it in silence. It was only after I lay between the clammy sheets of my bed a half-hour later that I suddenly remembered having said nothing in reply to her generous remark. And I fell asleep thinking of the thousand and one things I might have said and thanking my lucky stars I hadn't.

CHAPTER VII.

WE RETURN TO A COLD HOUSE.

"**W**OULD you care to see Warfield to-night? He's playing at the Illinois." As I asked the question I looked up from the first newspaper I had seen in days—Uncle Caspar, strange to say, subscribed to none; at least, so I inferred from seeing none about—and turned my head to Fern, who was lying back in one of the roomy armchairs beside the library-table.

It was mid afternoon of the next day. Outside a thirty-mile-an-hour lake wind, sleet-laden, whipped about the house. I had braved the gale before luncheon to go down-town for the exercise and to buy a paper and a pocketful of cigars.

The housekeeper had informed us at breakfast that Uncle Caspar had been called on urgent business to Detroit and that he would be gone until the next day. He had left word with her to that effect.

"David Warfield! Oh!"

Fern clasped her hands, her face lighting up with pleasure. And then

suddenly the smile faded from her face. She shook her head.

"I'm sorry," she faltered. "I can't go."

"Come on! It'll do you good to get out. Bundle up warmly. Be a good scout. You wouldn't see these two tickets go to waste, especially since I had the dickens of a time getting them this morning."

I was keenly disappointed and made no bones of concealing the fact.

Fern studied me a moment from under puckered brows. Then she shrugged and smiled.

"Well—I'll exert weak woman's prerogative and change my mind. I'll be glad to go, thank you."

She slid from her chair and walked across the floor to the door. There she turned and with hand on the knob faced me seriously.

"But listen here, young man," she said, half raising an admonitory forefinger. "I hope you won't be offended, but it must out. I don't want you to be spending your good money on me when you may need it sorely in getting started. That was why I declined just now, not that I didn't want to go with you. So there!"

And then before I could stay her she had flitted up the stairs to her room. I returned to my paper, but not to read.

I don't remember much of the play that night. My eyes were for the most part engaged in watching my fair companion in the seat beside me. Sitting there, flushing and paling alternately, lips slightly parted, bosom rising and falling as the play progressed, she presented an entrancing picture.

She was charming enough to turn the head of any man—and I was no misogynist. I had known other girls—scores of them; had danced with them, flirted with them, petted them, and had talked sense to some of them; but never had I met a girl like this. I—

Well, I didn't come to earth until I

was fumbling in the cold front hall of the Doonby Street house for the light-switch.

"*Br-r-r-r-r!*" Fern shivered, dancing on her toes. "Cold! Mm-m-m-my! The house is like a tomb. Hannah let the fire die."

"I'll go down and shake it up after I get my duds off. Which way down?" I asked.

"Through the kitchen. I'll show you."

Fern threw off her cloak and led the way to the kitchen. She found the door to the basement. It was locked and bolted. I opened it, and after a search located the light-switch.

Fern picked up her skirts and descended with me. She remained standing on the bottom step but one, while I went forward to reconnoiter.

"Fire's out!" I reported as I opened the furnace door and looked in. "Better build one—h-m?"

"Never mind. We'll start a fire in the grate and warm up there. There's a basket. Kindling and coal's over there. I'm about frozen stiff."

In less than a jiffy I had filled the basket with shavings and a few pieces of wood. I found a tin bucket and piled it with great chunks of coal. Coming up to the girl with my load, I found her peering beyond me into the deep shadows behind the furnace.

"What's up?" I asked sharply.

"Don't you smell anything?"

I sniffed. "Nothing. Why?"

"Try again. I'm sure I smell fresh cigarette-smoke. You haven't been smoking."

"By Jove! You're right!"

Unconsciously my voice lowered. I cast a glance over my shoulder and set down my basket. It was but two steps to the furnace. I took them and circled around it, my head lowered, hands held out before me. They encountered nothing but emptiness.

I struck a match and lighted up the corner that lay in the shadow. I explored the coal-bin in like manner, but without result.

There were no other nooks sufficiently large to conceal a skulker, so I returned to the girl, who had stanchly held her position at the foot of the stairs.

"Nothing doing. The windows are closed, and that door there is padlocked from this side. Guess we've been seeing things."

Fern shook her head obstinately.

"No. I smelled cigarette-smoke the minute I opened the door up there. I didn't smell it before. Some one has been in here within the past hour."

"Well, there's no one here now," I retorted—a trifle impatiently, I'm afraid. "I'll stake my life on that. Maybe it was Hannah."

"Don't be silly. Did you try the windows? I think some one tried to get in, but was stopped by the locked door at the top of the steps. He wasn't in the kitchen, else we'd have smelled smoke up there. How about the windows?"

"I didn't try them. They seemed tight. Wait a minute."

The windows were made to swing upward. In the sill below each was screwed a catch, which when turned at right angles to the length of the sash effectually closed the window to ingress from the outside.

On the second window I tried the catch was down. I raised it.

"You were right. Some one has come through this window. I guess he got disgusted when he ran up against the bolted door and beat it.

"Where does that door lead to?" I asked, pointing to the only door in the small cellar—a new one of pine, with glinting hinges and solid padlock.

"Mr.—er—father's dark-room—where he works on his camera—films, you know. Come on. I must get warmed up."

The poor girl's teeth were chattering by this time, both from cold and nervousness. She locked and bolted the basement door herself. I stood by while she did it, knowing that she'd

feel more secure for having done it herself.

Then we hurried to the library. Fern hopped up into a chair and curled her feet below her, and hugged herself to keep warm while I kindled the fire. The chimney was hungry, and in less time than it takes to tell I had a crackling, comforting blaze.

"Make yourself comfortable while I go up and wash my hands," I said. "You're not afraid?"

"Afraid? Poof! Don't be gone long, though."

When I returned shortly the fire had already taken some of the dank chill from the room.

"Hannah's snoring thinly but peacefully above us. I heard her as I passed her door," I announced as I rolled up a chair and stretched out my feet to the fire.

Fern nodded absently.

"Are you sure you locked all the cellar windows? And about that door there—are you certain it's locked?" she asked.

"Positive! Don't worry. It 'd take an ax to get through that door. If a thief came snooping around to steal Uncle Caspar's ideas he got stung. I suppose that's why Uncle Caspar had the door made so solid."

"Father's awfully secretive about the photographic process he's working on," Fern observed. "Why, a day or two before you came I happened to go down for something or other, and—father"—again that slight hesitancy before speaking of Uncle Caspar thus—"and father was just coming out. He started when he saw me—it is always dusky down there—and made for me as if he would seize me, but when he saw it was I he growled and said that I'd startled him.

"He had his mind on some plates he was developing, and hadn't expected to see any one. He—he actually swore at me, and told me sharply never to come down there again. He has a wicked temper when he's aroused."

She shivered and drew the filmy wrap closer about her shoulders. The corners of her sensitive mouth drew down into the deep-etched setting that made her look as if the moribund atmosphere of the house and its master had bitten deep into her being. She held out her hand before her palm upward, fingers outspread, and gazed at it intently.

"Before I came here I hadn't a nerve in my body; but now it seems as though I'm all nerves, and that they were all pulling in opposite directions. I've— Honestly, at times I've been afraid— desperately afraid of something in that man.

"I fancy the long siege of sickness I've been through would account for a lot of those silly notions. Right now I'd give almost anything not to have come."

"What made you come in the first place?" I asked.

She shrugged.

"I really don't know. A mistaken sense of duty, I guess. I had planned to spend the Christmas holidays with a friend at Winston-Salem, but when I received a pitiful note from father, begging me to come to him, I gave up my own plans. He was sick and wanted me with him, he said.

"It's been the most wretched Christmas season I've ever spent. I hadn't been here two days before was taken down with pneumonia, and had to stay in bed for weeks and weeks. Can you imagine what that meant? It was pretty lonesome in this old house with no one about, let me tell you."

"But your father was here, wasn't he?"

"Yes; but he was glooming around and biting his nails most of the time. He wasn't good company. He's not my real father, you know. He married my mother when I was fifteen years old.

"My mother died a half year after he married her. I was in my first year at Stanshope. He was an altogether different man then. He was

careful about his appearance, and was even good-looking. And he seemed so kind!"

"Then your name isn't Valentine?" I interjected.

"No, it's Gracely— Fern Gracely. I thought you knew that. Of course, I kept my name when mother married again.

"He lost interest in me after mother went seemingly. He visited me at the school at odd intervals, wrote seldom, and really never seemed to belong to me or I to him. He never told me what he was doing, never asked me to come home, never was more than a half-interested stranger. The Great Lakes Trust Company sent me a quarterly remittance from property mother had left in their hands.

"So I really depended more on them than on my stepfather. I never really loved him as a daughter would her father. He never gave me a chance.

"Tell me! Isn't it his fault that I can't bring myself to feel any love, any affection for him? That he was never more than a stepfather to my heart? I'm not to blame, am I?" she asked with pitiful earnestness.

I shook my head. A great surge of sympathy for the girl engulfed me. It did not require a vivid imagination to picture the dreary round of days in a strange house among strangers. The emptiness and desperate loneliness must have eaten like acid into the heart of the girl. She asked for bread, and was handed a stone; her hand was open to give, but there was none to take.

To be home and yet home-sick!

And as I thought back over the disappointing relationship that existed between her and her stepfather, my uncle, I could easily account for her aloofness when first I was introduced.

She lay back in her chair, her eyes fixed dreamily on the swirling flames. At length she spoke again, slowly and pensively.

"I've often wondered how it must feel to have a real father. When I was still at Stanshope, and the girls' mothers came to visit them and the girls proudly showed them off, I'd slip away to the dorms and cry my eyes out because I no longer possessed one.

"And as for father—well, I never could feel anything approaching affection for him. I've tried and tried and *tried* to love him—to be intimate with him, tell him things, you know, and ask him things—but I simply couldn't. I've never felt free when he was with me, and I was always glad when he left. Here in this gloomy old house I've actually been afraid of him at times."

She paused a moment, and as I nodded comprehendingly she went on:

"It sounds horrid to say these things, but I've fairly ached to tell them to some one who would understand. You do, I know. I'm—I'm afraid I've been wickedly selfish in drooling all this into your ears. You can't begin to know what a relief it has been, though—and I want to thank you for your patience. Listen!"

The clock struck twice.

"Two o'clock!" she cried, springing to her feet. "I'm warm as toast now, and if I don't go to bed this minute you'll have to carry me up."

"Is that a dare?" I asked, edging toward her.

If she had given me the slightest encouragement, I believe I would have taken her slender body up in my arms and borne her to her room. There was nothing I would have desired more to do.

But she stepped back a pace. A warm flush rose from her shoulders and tinted her cheeks. She smiled faintly and shook her head.

"No, no! I'm no longer an invalid, thank you!"

She straightened her chair.

"Is the front door bolted? And the windows?"

"I haven't made the rounds, but I'll

do it now. You're not expecting another visit from our basement caller?"

"No. I'm in your care, remember! And now, good night. I've had a perfectly splendid time. Good night, Phil."

She extended her hand with the candor of good-comradeship and smiled sleepily up at me. And as I held the soft little finger in mine and wished her good night, I began to think that this little old world wasn't such a bad place after all.

CHAPTER VIII.

I LEAVE MY UNCLE'S HOUSE.

UNCLE CASPAR blew in at about seven o'clock the following evening. I say "blew in" advisedly, for he came on the crest of a slanting snow-storm that had kept us indoors all day.

I don't remember what we did from nine in the morning until seven at night, but I do know that as the girl and I sat down to the evening meal I reflected that it had been a most satisfactory day. Looking across at Fern, who was asking whether I liked one or two in my tea, I was wishing to high heaven that she might ask me that question three hundred and sixty-five times a year in the years to come, when a key rasped in the lock of the front door, and Uncle Caspar broke in upon us.

He came into the dining-room, stamped the snow from his shoes, threw off his hat and coat, and dropped into a chair at the table, breathing like a wheezy engine after an up-hill climb. His face was flushed, and his eyes, usually a chill, steely gray, now smoldered like live coals. He seemed in high spirits.

"Whee! It's cold outside! Snowing and blowing forty ways for Sunday. Hannah! Hannah! Confound it!"

He pushed back his chair and strode impatiently into the kitchen. After a

minute he returned and seated himself with a resumption of his former breeziness.

"Well, well!" he said, rubbing his hands and beaming upon us. "Seems good to be back. Have a good time while I was gone?"

He cackled and rubbed his fingers as if he were shaking hands with himself for being in good humor. I simply gazed at him. I couldn't do anything else. Imagine yourself sitting down to a quiet little meal and looking forward to a long, lazy evening, and then have some one whom you least wanted to see burst in on you. You wouldn't feel like falling on his neck and welcoming him—now, would you?

Well, I didn't. A glance at Fern showed me that she shared my feelings.

"Speak out! Say something!" demanded Uncle Caspar, the good humor freezing slowly from his face.

His eyes, traveling from one to the other of us, narrowed perceptibly.

"Why, you haven't given us a chance!" protested Fern. "I haven't had time to catch my breath. We didn't expect you back until later in the evening."

"You didn't, eh? Well, how—Nothing's happened, has it? Both o' you look's if you were at a funeral. What's up?"

"Nothing whatever," answered Fern, who had by this time regained her composure. "We've had a quiet time. Oh, yes! There was something. Last night, when we came back from the theater, we thought that some one had been prowling around down-cellar."

"Down-cellar!" Uncle Caspar exclaimed. "How did you know? How did you happen to go down there?" he asked severely.

Fern told him. She narrated the incident in detail. Singularly, though, the intelligence did not disturb Uncle Caspar as I had thought it would. He took it much as if midnight visits of

unknown prowlers were common occurrences.

He asked about the pine door, and whether we had found it locked, but betrayed only casual interest in the rest of the story.

Meantime, Hannah set his plate. He began eating hungrily. Between mouthfuls, he studied several legal-looking documents that he had taken from his pocket and laid on the tablecloth.

From time to time his eyes lifted to my face musingly for a second, and then dropped back to the perusal of his papers. Presently he folded up the latter and returned them to his pocket, looking at me measuringly the while as if he were trying to arrive at some decision.

Slowly he leaned toward me then, and lowered his voice confidentially. His tone dripped good-will.

"Phillip, my boy, I want to speak to you a few minutes after we've eaten. I'm about to do something big this time—bigger 'n I've ever done before; and I want to talk it over with you. Two heads are better 'n one, and, even though you don't know much about the real-estate game, talking it over with you may make me see it clearer in my own mind.

"It's a gigantic thing—stupendous! And it's a sure thing if it's handled right. Who knows? Maybe I may let you in on it.

"I need hardly say that anything I tell you must be kept under your hat. You're discreet, and you won't let it leak out. Mum's the word! It struck me this afternoon that it was about time I was doing something handsome for my brother's only son—eh?"

He smiled indulgently. If he had been near enough he would have patted my hand, I'm sure.

The harsh, deep wrinkles about his mouth softened appreciably; the old wolfish gleam in his eyes was thawed in a warmth of kindness. He seemed so genuinely happy over being able to do me a good turn that I felt a tran-

sient twinge of regret for my churlish behavior at his entrance.

"That's downright white of you," I said. "I surely appreciate it. I was wondering a bit what I'd do. I was going to ask you to help me find a job. Lord knows, I need one bad enough!"

He looked nonplused for a second.

"Ha—ha-ha-ha—heh!" he cackled noisily, slapping the table with the palm of his hand. "Ha-ha! That's a good one! That's a peach! A man with a quarter of a million looking for a job! Ha-ha—heh! What do you know about that, Fern? Can you beat it?"

Though he tried hard to cover it, he could not wholly conceal the uneasiness that my words had awakened in him. Concern loomed big in the steel-gray eyes that searched my face. His laughter rang flatly metallic.

"Yes, I'm looking for a job," I continued, as if there had been no interruption.

And then I told him as briefly as possible what I had already told Fern. He heard me through to the end without a word, but his face betrayed his feelings. It went a mottled yellow and gray, so that the wrinkles and lines stood out as if they had been sketched with charcoal.

His lower jaw slackened; his Adam's-apple rose and fell spasmodically. He breathed thinly, with an asthmatic whine like the sound of a thin jet of steam escaping from a defective pipe. The sound irritated me.

After I concluded he sat for a moment in stunned silence, while the pink slowly crept back to his leaden cheeks. Then he brushed his hand before his eyes, as if to remove a clogging mist.

I saw his lids draw together. His eyes fixed and grew hard at flint. And as he leveled them at me instinctively I braced myself for an explosion. It came.

He laughed—a mean, snarling laugh that showed all his teeth.

"Heh-heh!"

And again:

"Heh-heh! One born every minute! Oh, Lord! What a saphead! What a poor fool! A quarter of a million! Gone! Just like that!"

He extended his thin, trembling hands, palms upward, and spread his fingers, looking down at them as if watching something trickle through them to the table. He laughed again venomously.

I found myself on my feet, the hot blood smashing against my ear-drums and throbbing wildly in my fingertips. Fine needle-points of light danced before my eyes, blurring sight. I blinked them away impatiently, and leaped, crooked fingers out, as my uncle started for me.

"Phil! For Heaven's sake, Phil! Caspar Valentine, how dare you? Stop! Stop it, I say!"

It was the girl's sharp cry that brought me to my senses. My hands dropped to my sides. At the same time I received a crashing blow in the face.

I fell back a pace. I threw up my hands to ward off another blow, but none fell.

Came again Caspar Valentine's hateful, maddening cackle. He was leaning against the table, left hand resting upon it, the right drawn back, waiting.

A grin twisted his lips. I never hated man more.

Fern was standing beside her chair. She was quivering with excitement. Her face was as white as the cloth before her. The look she directed at the crouching man was charged with horror and withering scorn.

"Let him alone!" Caspar Valentine threw to her over his shoulder.

Then to me:

"Come on! Come on, you sap-headed rah-rah! What are you waiting for, anyway? I'll paste you another one!"

Strangely enough I answered with a laugh; and then rushed out with:

"You sneaking cur! You low-

down crook! No wonder dad despised you and wouldn't have anything to do with you! Right now I'm tickled to death that Steele robbed me, if only for the satisfaction of knowing that your dirty hands will never touch a cent of it!"

I let him have that, and then turned on my heel and walked from the room. If I had remained a second longer I could not have resisted the impulse to grind his leering face into the dusty rug.

I went up-stairs to the room I had occupied.

It did not take me long to throw my belongings into my suit-cases. In less than five minutes I had packed up and was down in the hall again. White-hot anger rendered me incapable of thought other than to get out of the accursed house as quickly as possible.

I grabbed my hat and coat from the hall-tree and made for the door. I jerked it open savagely and passed outside.

The nearest car-line was three blocks off. I forgot about the short cut through the alley in the rear of the house to the Elevated. I made for the car-tracks, therefore, through the fast-drifting snow, fighting against a biting wind.

Had it been a calm, warm night I believe I would have gone up in flame then and there, but the storm was an opponent upon which I could vent some of my bottled wrath. When at length I got to the swinging arc-lamp on the corner and waited in the cold for my car I shook my clenched fist at the distant house and vowed I'd never again darken its door.

CHAPTER IX.

I HUNT A JOB.

THE days following were the dreariest I have ever dragged through. My money in pocket had dwindled down to less than thirty dollars, and

the necessity of striking out to wrest a living from the cold, selfish world demanded immediate, earnest attention.

But what could I do? That thought worried me. What had I to offer to prospective employers?

What references? Where were you last? What can you do?

These were the questions that hit me in the face wherever I went. At the end of the first week I had to admit to myself that I could do very little, and that my chances of landing a job of any kind in Chicago were as slim as those of a diver in a desert.

Added to this sickening discovery was the constantly abiding thought of Fern and her plight. I had visited the house once, but did not get to see her. Of that I shall tell later.

There were three hundred thousand unemployed in Chicago that winter. Three hundred thousand! And I was one of them.

From Wabash to Canal and from Jackson to Ohio it seemed that every third man I met was looking for a job. Canal and Madison streets, the recruiting stations for the army of the down-and-outs, were black with floaters whose tight-drawn bellies were empty of bread.

I was better fixed than most. I had a good suit of clothes. But when there are twenty thousand well-dressed men clamoring for a chance to fill one vacancy, nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine are bound to be disappointed.

And when you stop to consider that I was untrained—that never before had done a tap of work—you may, perhaps, gain some idea of what I was up against. I did not appreciate to the full in what contempt the inexperienced man is held in the business world until a humiliating, disheartening week had passed.

I had a pair of good legs, and, from my mother's side, an obstinate Scotch streak that kept them grimly pounding the pavement. Fern's confident words,

"They can't keep a good man down," ran through my mind continually, and I kept on hoping and trying.

Long since I had removed from the high-priced hotel whither I had gone the night I left my uncle's house, to a two-by-four room on Wilson Avenue, and there I would have been measurably comfortable if only I had a job. I no longer sought a "position"; by this time I wanted nothing better than a plain job.

Day after day I plodded along, miserable as a homeless cur at times, but sustained throughout by the firm conviction that I'd win out finally if I did not quit the fight. And though failure succeeded failure, I settled down to the hot-eyed, dry-handed determination to try every office in Chicago before I'd admit myself beaten—and then I'd do the rounds again!

Midwinter in Chicago, and jobless! Gentle reader, if you have ever been in a similar predicament, I need say nothing more—you understand; if you have not, a page or two of description would fail to convey one-half the loneliness, the hopeless beating against the wall, the dry ache of disappointment, that was my portion.

Two weeks of rubbing up against the seamy side of life had sloughed off all the dead skin of heedlessness and irresponsibility that had clogged me at college.

It was a hard school, but one in which I was learning rapidly.

I was getting the right values. I was changing from a kid into a man.

"In two weeks this transformation?" I hear you ask.

Yes! Try it for yourself some time if you are skeptical; but try it when the ice on Canal Street is six inches thick and the bread-line is a mile or two long.

Before I was reduced to the extremity of standing in line with the other unfortunates Fortune smiled on me. I landed a job with the Blake Taxi Service.

It wasn't much of a place, but I was

tickled to death to get it. At least, it assured me bread and butter and tobacco and other necessities of life until warmer weather melted the ice of business depression and a more desirable opening came my way. Then, too, I knew that I was earning every cent of the wages paid me, and with that knowledge I experienced a sense of strength and capability, and of a right to a place in the doing world.

My room on Wilson Avenue was at a convenient distance from the Blake garage. It would be my home for some weeks to come, I figured; and since I had brought comparatively little wearing apparel with me, I decided to have my trunk sent to this address. So I posted a letter to Billy Armstrong the next morning to have it forwarded at once.

This event in my career happened in the third week after my abrupt departure from my uncle's inhospitable roof-tree.

CHAPTER X.

I GO BACK TO DOONBY STREET.

AND now I must go back in my narration to the day when I moved to the room on Wilson Avenue. Among the personal effects left to me by my father was a jade scarf-pin, which he prized highly. It possessed little intrinsic value, but because of the sentimental associations I wore it frequently and cherished it.

Now, upon unpacking my suit-case, I failed to find it, and I wondered whether I had lost it. I did not remember wearing it while at the hotel. But suddenly I happened to think that, in my haste to get out of the house on Doonby Street, I had left it sticking in the inside of the collar-drawer of the dresser in my room.

Undoubtedly it was there yet. I wouldn't have parted with it for anything, so on a sudden I resolved to go and demand it, although I could hardly expect a cordial reception.

Then, too, I thought that with the stick-pin as an excuse for visiting the house again, an opportunity of seeing Fern, if only for a minute, might present itself. And that decided me.

It was after six o'clock when I unlatched the iron gate set in the stone wall and strode up to my uncle's door, which I had slammed so uncereemoniously forty-eight hours before. Save for one side-window on the upper floor, the house was unlighted.

I pressed the bell-button. No jarring clangor replied. I raised the iron knocker and let it fall sharply. The sound echoed back through the hall and died away sullenly. No movement came from within.

I waited a full minute and let the knocker fall again. And when my summons again met with no response, the snap determination that had carried me to the house trickled from me. Literally and figuratively, I began to get cold feet.

I walked to the end of the open porch, the boards cracking as loud as pistol-shots in the quiet, intensely cold air. By holding to the porch-pillar and leaning outward, I was able to get a view of the unshuttered window in which I had seen a light when I first approached the house. The window was dark; the light had been extinguished.

I walked back to the front door on my tiptoes, holding my breath. And scarcely had I taken a dozen short steps before the fine hairs on the back of my neck began to bristle uncomfortably. There swept over me the creepy feeling of being watched by an invisible pair of eyes from the tomblike interior.

I'm not timid. I'm not morbidly inclined. But somehow, right then and there, I had to fight to keep from breaking into a panicky run as I descended the steps.

The gray stone bulk, with its shuttered windows, its blasted vines through which the cold snow sifted with a ghostly, awesome rustle, the

silence and the isolation, all combined to send an involuntary shiver through me that was not of the cold. I drew my coat-collar more tightly about my neck and hurried to the lights of busy, human State Street.

As I sat in my room that night I laughed at myself for my kid timidity. And yet there was something about the whole business that I did not like. If Fern had been within and had seen me, surely she would have made her presence known unless she had been prevented by some one. I was sanguine enough to believe—

Ah well, a man knows when he's found the right girl, and he can tell whether the girl likes him enough to let him fall in love with her. A thousand and one little things that can't be set down in cold type led me to believe that Fern cared for me in that way.

The thousand and one things were not needed to tell me that I cared for her. I *did* care, as I never had cared before. I recognized it for the real thing.

But when in the blue days of fruitless job-hunting disappointment succeeded disappointment, and each new disappointment brought closer to me a realization of how little I was really worth, I began to look at things in a new light. Time and again when the desire to see the girl gnawed relentlessly, I was kept from running out to the house on Doonby Street only by telling myself repeatedly that I—a failure—had no right to think of any woman, let alone *the* woman. So I kept away.

But I could not resist writing two brief notes to her. They must have been intercepted, for I received no answer to either.

And then when I landed the first job of my life, a job I really could hold down, I forgot all about my adamant resolution to remain away from the girl. My first thought was of Fern.

Almost three weeks, three long weeks, had passed since I had sat op-

posite her and had built foolish, flimsy air castles. I wondered whether she had thought of me in the interval. No, I'll take that back; I didn't wonder—I *knew* she had.

It was about four of the afternoon then that I swung off the surface-car at the corner three blocks from the house. As I set off toward my destination I hoped that fortune would continue to be kind to me. I hoped that I should find Fern and the housekeeper alone—that Uncle Caspar would be away. I didn't relish another encounter with the sharp-faced scoundrel who, though he was my father's brother, resembled my father in no particular.

The gate stood open. I turned in—and stopped dead in my tracks. The snow that had fallen a week before and still lay thick on the ground was ridged and hollowed and thickly strewn with wind-blown soot until it looked like a large-scale relief-map of Death Valley. But what held me was the fact that nowhere lay a human footprint.

The area between the gate and the house lay undisturbed. Clearly no one had passed in or out for a week. I stepped back to the middle of the road and looked up. No smoke issued from the chimney.

The house seemed lifeless, untenanted. Fern, the housekeeper, and the hatchet-faced schemer alike were gone. For full five minutes I stood in the snow of the road, gaping stupidly up at the house, hoping against hope that my senses were at fault. But all indications—the shuttered, expressionless windows, the unbroken stretch of snow, the drift against the front door, the smokeless chimney—all these evidences pointed to the correctness of my conclusion.

And then the rattle-brained impulse of gaining an entrance and securing my stick-pin seized me. Without stopping to reason that no doubt it had long ago been found and might even now be adorning Caspar Valentine's

cravat, I crunched through the crusted snow to the front door.

It was locked and resisted my efforts to open it. I turned away, casting about for some other avenue of entrance. The shade of the big, unshuttered window looking out upon the porch was drawn.

Looking closer in the dimming light, I could see that the catch was tight. Ingress there was barred unless I smashed the pane. I knew, for I myself had tested every catch on the night when Fern and I returned from the theater to find that some one had been prowling about in the basement. As I ran over the ground-floor windows in my mind I recalled but one that offered any encouragement.

It was one of the dining-room windows on the east side of the house. I remembered that the piece of sash into which the screws holding the catch had been driven was rotted. A sharp upward tug might tear out the screws. It was worth trying.

From the porch where I stood I could see out over the stone wall and along the street. I cast a searching look that way before I stepped down. The street was bare.

Reasonably assured against interruption, I jumped down from the porch and hurried around the corner of the house. A high board fence, built flush with the back of the house, screened my movements from any one who might be looking out of the windows of the bungalows on the other side of the valley.

I stripped off my gloves and stuffed them into my overcoat-pocket. Straining on my tiptoes, I could reach the sill of the window. I drew myself up and, clinging with my left hand, I tried for a nail-grip below the sash with my right.

The window was loose, as I had suspected. I tugged mightily. The screws tore out of the rotted pulp. With scarcely a sound the sash slid up. I threw my leg over and stepped inside, lowered the sash again, and slipped

from behind the shade, which had been down.

I searched my pockets for matches, but could find none; my cigar-lighter was next to useless for illuminating purposes. So I stood stock-still a brief space until my eyes became to some degree accustomed to the gloom. Even then I could see but little.

I took a step forward to cross to the light-switch and ran *smash-bang!* into a chair. It startled me. I waited until the hollow echoes had rumbled out to silence and then proceeded more slowly.

The accident had given me my bearings. I veered to the left, skirted the table, and reached the switch without further mishap.

The lights flared up. I looked about me.

Everything was much as I had last seen it. The bunch of roses in the vase on the table drooped black and wilted. Below, a ragged, dirty smear stained the cloth.

The water in the vessel had frozen, no doubt, and cracked it. Two plates, unwashed, lay on the table. Vitiating, cold-furnace air hung in the room.

I marked the hall door, switched off the light, and steered for it in the dark. My groping hand encountered the stair-rail. I gripped it and ascended, the steps creaking dismally under my weight. I was anxious to finish my business and get away.

Without hesitation I made for the room I had occupied and felt for the drop-light. The socket was there, but it held no bulb. There was one at the far end of the hall I knew. I went to get it, but miscalculated the distance and blundered into the bath-room.

Here, when I turned on the light, I found a handful of matches. Leaving the bath-room—more confidently now, for a lighted match in my cupped hand afforded a sufficient illumination for me to see my way, and yet so little illumination as to render chance detection from without negligible—I turned

aside and entered Fern's room. The flickering match revealed a scene of disorder.

The closet door stood wide. The hooks on the sides were bare of clothes. Sprawling out from it lay a flimsy dress. Bureau-drawers gaped emptily. The dresser-top was stripped of articles of feminine adornment. The scarf hung crazily down one side. A tiny shoe peeped out from under the tousled bed; its mate lay in a corner. All spoke strongly of a hasty departure.

A sound from the rear of the house startled me. I dropped the match and listened. It was only a loose shutter flapping in the breeze.

I struck another match and blew it out before it could burst into flame. For in the medley of noises that the wind made in scurrying about the corners of the old house I thought I detected an alien note. It sounded like a strangled sneeze or cough. I listened for a long minute.

The sound was not repeated. I dropped back slowly to my heels, but my nerves were still tingling as I passed out of Fern's room and made for mine.

My legs were anxious to carry me to the stairs and down and away, and it was only by an effort of the will that I held them from bolting incontinently.

I'd get my pin—if it was there—if it made me a doddering nervous wreck for the rest of my life! This I grimly told myself as I turned and entered the door.

Instinct warned me before my senses could telegraph the danger. I ducked and took a step in retreat. But I was not quick enough.

A heavy something whizzed past my ear and landed with paralyzing force on my shoulder. At the same instant a darker shadow detached itself from the shadows of the doorway, lunged toward me, and grasped me about the middle.

(To be concluded next month.)

Brine in the Blood



Captain A.E. Dingle

Author of "Made at Sea," "The Storm-cloud," "The Death-diver," etc.

I.

NOW that Philip Nichols had received a legacy, totally unexpected and gratifyingly ample, he determined to carry out a plan that had long been his dream. Though still to windward of forty, Nichols had sailed the seas for twenty-five years—and had attained success as a clipper-commander.

In his early days as boy, able seaman, and junior mate, he had bumped the sharpest corners of the business—bullying mates, rum-swilling skippers, niggardly owners, and soured ship-mates with a grievance that was justified by the horrible conditions prevailing in the foul forecables of that day.

He had spent long night-watches dreaming of means whereby their lot might be ameliorated. And he had come to a very definite conclusion on the subject.

If owners would allow their skippers an adequate number of officers, pay their mates a wage that would attract competent men, allow the ship's husband a fair sum for victualing, and consider that if men are to behave

like men they must not be housed like pigs—then, he was convinced, increased efficiency would keep profits up to standard and crews would not have to be "shanghaied" to man the ships.

Now he was putting his theory to the test. He had served his first hard years as boy and foremast-hand in the Crescent Line of freighters; in all his voyaging he had found no harder ships. With his legacy he bought up the four vessels that constituted the line, engaged an agent to carry on the business and keep his name out of it, and set out to make a voyage—or at least a passage—in every ship of the line, to observe conditions from the onlooker's view-point, and if possible to eradicate the canker that kept the sailing-ship profession in evil repute among seamen.

Making the passage out to Sydney in the Marblehead, he had arrived the day before the Montauk sailed with a note-book full of gleanings for future guidance.

First he had noticed that the Marblehead was sorely short of officers. Now, sailing past Sydney Heads

homeward bound, he found the same situation — skipper and one mate — “only mate” in sea rating.

He looked around the well-kept decks, which proclaimed the competency of John Paul, and a flush suffused his face as he counted the shamefully insufficient crew — additional testimony to the capability of an officer who could achieve such results with such inadequate material.

As the mess-kids went forward at seven bells he strolled past the galley; he shuddered at the unsavory mess that constituted the fo’c’s’le fare. It was bad—even for a “hard” ship.

In the cabin, however, he found the food varied and plentiful. Captain Digby bore himself at table as one accustomed to doing well by himself. The captain was alone as Nichols entered, for of course the mate must wait until his superior had finished.

Nichols realized as never before the awful solitude of these two men on a wearisome passage where, in the absence of a passenger—and passengers were rare enough on the Crescent Line—each must forever eat alone. He remarked upon the circumstance as the skipper folded his napkin.

“I don’t mind it,” said the skipper shortly. “Rather eat alone than in the company of some of the scum shipping as mates.”

“Does your mate, Mr. Paul, think that way?” pursued Nichols.

“Don’t know what he thinks. If he wants company he’s welcome to eat for’ard.”

Digby rose abruptly, adding:

“Just step into my cabin and put your name on the articles. We’re allowed to carry no passengers; every person we carry must fill a position—nominally at least.”

“Yes—I’d forgotten for a moment,” smiled the passenger, following the skipper. “I signed on as third mate in the vessel I came out in. Will that do? I’ve traveled so much in sailing-ships that I could stand a watch at a pinch.”

“Third mate or third cook’s mate, it’s all the same to me, sir. All you’ve got to do is to get your grub at meal-times and keep out of the way when work’s afoot.”

II.

SMOKING his pipe in the waist, Nichols secured many items for his note-book. Through the afternoon and first dog-watch a shift of wind, and later an increase in its strength, gave work to the hands. A pull on the braces had no life in it until John Paul jumped in with a shout and a strong arm; then the heavy yards swung as if doubly manned.

And when the fore-royal sheet and brace parted at once to windward, hatching at that dizzy height such a thrashing demon that the befuddled heads of the shore-doped seamen forbade them to tackle it, the ubiquitous mate took the rigging at a bound and muzzled the monster.

“Uncommon mate; too good to koto to a bearish skipper,” was Nichols’s mental comment.

After supper the mate standing the first watch—that from eight o’clock to midnight—the passenger joined John Paul on the poop, the skipper having retired to his cabin. The bark smoked along to a brisk half gale, her bows hoary with flying spume, masts and rigging a thrumming harp full of wild harmony, while high up, to starboard, the Southern Cross glimmered with watery brilliance through rifts in the flying cloud-wrack.

“The bark seems to do well, Mr. Paul. D’ye think it ’ll blow?” ventured Nichols, falling into step with the quarter-deck pace of the mate.

“Our own weather, sir,” replied Paul, sending a ready glance to windward and sniffing at the gale. “She’s a stout old girl, and likes a breeze.”

“Followed the sea long, Mr. Paul?”

“Fifteen years, sir.”

“Fond of the life?”

Paul laughed softly.

"Don't want to change, sir. There are some things that might be improved in the life; but it's the everlasting sea and these old square-riggers that appeal to me in spite of all the drawbacks which owners might remedy."

"As what, for instance?"

The mate stepped to the wheel, peered into the binnacle, then at the quivering leeches of the t'gall'nts'ls, and gave a quiet reprimand to the helmsman. The passenger watched him narrowly, awaiting his return. To invite complaints from an officer on duty was to apply the acid test of seamanlike conduct. And Nichols well knew this.

"See how she responds?" the mate enthused, sending a glance of satisfaction at the hissing sea, shining white as it left the quarter. "The helm was choking her."

Nichols nodded silent assent; then returned to the subject he had in mind.

"You were saying that owners might improve conditions, Mr. Paul. I'm rather interested."

"Excuse me, Mr. Nichols," replied the mate. "My business is to sail the ship in my watch, and to back my skipper at all times. I have no desire to qualify as a sea-lawyer."

"But a general opinion is permitted, surely. For example, you're an only mate; that must constitute a hardship. And promotion, now—"

"That's coming near home," laughed Paul, halting to slacken up the mizzen signal-halyards, iron-tight with the dampness.

"It'll do no harm to say that it's hardly fair to ask a skipper to keep four-hour watches all the time, and then, in the event of bad weather, keep the deck, as he must do, until the ship's out of danger," Paul continued. "An extra mate is not very expensive; the lack of one is sometimes false economy."

"As for promotion: Better men would come to sea, and more good men would stay in the profession, if

merit, and not the owner's or skipper's private pull, was the standard."

"Perhaps captains have a good deal to do with the owner's attitude," suggested Nichols, determined to push his point. "Captain Digby, now; is he—"

"Captain Digby is my superior, sir. Anyway, my opinion on that score is worthless. I joined the Montauk this trip in Sydney, never sailed with him before, and know him no better than you do."

"Oh! I thought you had sailed in the bark for years. You seem to know her sailing-points so well."

"She has points that should be obvious to a sailor at sight, sir," replied the mate, pride in his profession ringing in his voice.

Nichols bade Paul good night, after a fruitless effort to draw the officer into further confidences, and went to his berth with a warm feeling in his heart for the Montauk's only mate.

"True blue and a fathom wide!" he soliloquized as he turned in.

Rolling along to the southeast with a strong beam wind, leaning to the weight of her power until the creaming seas cascaded through the lee channels and the weather rigging hummed like 'cello strings, the bark behaved like a "sweet ship"—a lady among square-riggers.

The succession of fair breezes—the Montauk sailed for three weeks without starting a brace or sheet—reduced the ship's business to a matter of routine. Captain and mate alternated in keeping watches the same as the crew; on alternate days the passenger had a change of company at the noon meal, which gave him welcome variety, and at the same time enabled him the more closely to study both officers.

One thing was early noticeable—the degree of promptitude with which each relieved the other on deck. At the stroke of eight bells, invariably the mate appeared before the last note blew over the rail.

It was different when Captain Digby

relieved the deck. Half an hour was a moderate margin of leeway for him to take. Still the mate maintained his attitude of respect toward his superior, and when Digby did finally appear, would give the course with a smile.

Nichols saw these things. He saw the under-manned bark kept shipshape and trim; his own practised eye told him that every ounce of power was got out of the winds; the course steered was the shortest one home. And while Digby grew more slack in his deck-reliefs as time went on, the mate retained his cheerful demèanor and accepted all as in the line of duty.

Not until the Montauk reached her most southerly latitude and bore away for the Horn did anything occur to give a hint of what might come later. Fifty-six degrees south, heading east, a harder note whined in the rigging; a bite crept into the air, and the bark crushed the cold seas savagely. A watch on deck became a period of chilly anticipation of relief; a pull of the braces found a full watch of hands scuffling for the warming exercise.

The passenger went below to finish a pipe before turning in, having found the skipper but indifferent company on deck long before two bells in the first watch. Lounging on the dim transom lockers, his sea-bred senses lulled by the dancing shadows and the sonorous thunder of parting seas under the stern, Nichols half dozed; his pipe went out.

He opened his eyes as the companion-way door creaked on its hinges, admitting a gust of wet, salt wind, and a sea-boot sounded on the steps. Captain Digby stepped into the cabin, his black oilskin coat and tarpaulin hat dripping and glistening with spray.

Above the table a swing-rack tinkled to the roll and surge of the bark, its glasses and decanters dancing musically. The skipper took down a bottle, filled a tumbler to the brim, and drank it at a draft without a choke. Then he returned to the deck without having seen the passenger.

Nichols waited until the companion-way door shut to and the sliding door slammed into place. Then he stepped to the rack and took down the bottle. The label said—

BRANDY

He tasted a drain; it was full-powered spirit.

"H-m! Raw neaters, and in tumbler!" he muttered with a doubtful shake of the head.

He remembered that the skipper was studiously sparing with spirits at the table; only rarely had he seen Digby take a glass, and then it would be but a small one. Fearful of his new discovery, Nichols slipped on a coat, rammed a cap on his head, and ascended to the poop to see how matters looked.

The bark plunged athwart long, sullen, gray seas, protesting in every plank and spar. Scupper-ports clanged to leeward as she buried her side with every heave. Overhead, a pale crescent moon showed an infrequent horn through low-scudding billows of black cloud. A solitary star blinked audaciously, high over the main-truck; the horizon around the complete circle of heavens was overwhelmed in an all-embracing murk.

But the bark was not laboring. —A glance aloft into the noisy blackness satisfied Nichols that her trim was all that could be desired; she was snuggled down in sailorly fashion; and a sniff over the rail to windward gave no warning of imminent storm. The weather was simply "high-latitude" weather, to be expected in the region of "Cape Stiff."

Forward the ship was invisible, the side-lights hidden from aft by the screens. Near the wheel a keen eye might pick out a Rembrandtesque fragment. A faint glow of yellow light suffused the skylight-glasses with a

half glimmer that was too weak to dissipate the darkness of the deck.

Farther aft, in the wake of the skylight, a shaft of brighter light was projected from the invisible binnacle. It touched the helmsman, bringing his wooden features and rigid shoulders and arms into strong relief, painting the three upper spokes of the wheel with a varnish of radiance.

A dark figure stumped the weather side of the poop with machinelike regularity, halting at every second turn to peep into the binnacle. At such times the set face of the skipper was projected into the field of illumination.

Nichols was satisfied that the bark was being well cared for. He retired to his berth, astounded at the capacity of one who could take his brandy neat in half-pints, and keep an open-eyed watch on deck showing no signs of it.

At six o'clock the next morning he rose and went on deck. He felt a shock of surprise when he found the deck in charge of the mate, whose watch below it should have been, Paul having kept the middle watch. Paul's head was bared to the chill breeze; his face showed signs of weariness, but he stiffened up as the passenger approached.

"Good morning, Mr. Paul," greeted Nichols, gazing around the gray waste of tumbling ocean. "Making good weather, isn't she?"

"Fine, sir! Fine! She's a sweet old girl; harder it blows, harder she goes."

The last trace of weariness disappeared from the mate's open face—routed by his sailorly pride.

"Changed watches, haven't you?" asked Nichols.

A slight frown fled across Paul's features, to be instantly dispelled.

"No, sir. Captain's a bit under the weather. I'm keeping his watch this morning."

The passenger nodded and went below to dress for breakfast. When ready he stepped to the captain's door and knocked. He received no reply.

He turned the handle and entered.

"Good morning, captain," he ventured, approaching the bunk. "Sorry you're not feeling fit. Anything I can do?"

"What in blazes d'you mean by entering my cabin unasked?" snarled Digby from the blankets. "Get out!"

"Pardon, captain; but, knowing you're short-handed, I thought perhaps I could be of help. Can I get you anything? A little brandy?"

Digby's head emerged from the bedclothes, the veins standing out on his forehead like throbbing cords, the seatan deepened to mottled purple.

"No!" He spat the word at Nichols. "Will you leave my room?"

Suddenly his expression changed. He reached up a hand and pushed back the hair from his eyes, while a crooked smile played around his lips.

"Pardon, Mr. Nichols," he apologized; "you woke me out a troubled sleep. I suffer badly from headaches. Let it pass, please. And I'd be glad of a sip of brandy if you'll be so good."

Nichols fetched the bottle and a tumbler. Digby poured out barely enough to cover the bottom of the glass, swallowed it with a grimace, and handed it back with the remark:

"Thanks. Out of my line, you know, this stuff. Ugh! But it's useful sometimes, isn't it? In sickness, for instance."

III.

At seven bells the captain appeared and took breakfast with his passenger. Nichols watched him closely, but detected nothing beyond a slight unsteadiness of hand, which really might have been attributable to a bad night. At eight bells the mate was relieved, and joined Nichols, who had purposely lingered over his second cup of coffee.

But not one word would John Paul say regarding his enforced double watch, though Nichols gave him leads a plenty. The officer ate his food with

well-sharpened appetite, making a joke of the reeling table with its criss-cross of restraining fiddles and careering dishes, which every lurch of the bark threatened to deposit in chaos into the lee-side cabins.

Through the day the regular round of watches were kept. Nichols contrived to take a breezy airing each time the skipper had the deck. The weather had settled down hard and wet; the bark surged forward with vast commotion of bow and quarter wave under tops'ls and reefed fores'l, making good headway, but too wet and unsteady to permit any but strictly necessary work to be done. The men huddled in the lee of the galley for warmth, standing by for a call, otherwise moving only to relieve wheel or lookout.

That night the mate had the first watch, from eight to midnight, so Nichols was not surprised on going on deck in the morning to find Paul still in charge, for the skipper had stood the middle watch, he assumed. But Paul's usually cheerful countenance this morning wore a frown that seemed to invite inquiry.

"Skipper sick again?" asked Nichols, keenly watching the mate.

"Sick! *I'm* sick—of this! Don't know if he's sick or not; can't get into his room or get an answer. I know I've been on deck all night, and it looks as if I'll be here all day, too. If he *is* sick, I don't mind; but I'm beginning to believe that his last mate spoke truth."

"What was that, Mr. Paul?" prompted Nichols quietly.

"Why, he said— Oh, well! It's none of my business to chew the rag about the old man. Perhaps he'll turn up smiling at eight bells—and he may be sick, after all. I guess I was just feeling sleepy—sore; that's all, sir."

The mate turned abruptly away and sent a man to get him a mug of coffee, leaving Nichols more than ever impressed with his qualities as a seaman and an officer. The captain failed

to appear at breakfast; the sun showed for an instant at nine o'clock, but he let go by the chance to get a much-needed observation for longitude.

Nichols noticed this, and offered to help Paul get sights; but the chronometers were in the skipper's room, and that was locked.

This matter was the more serious as the bark was drawing near to Cape Horn, and a precise knowledge of the longitude was essential for the safety of the ship and her people. In the absence of better means, and to ease his own mind, Nichols examined the chart, took the last position pricked off, and with the aid of the log-book, and the slate for the last watch, worked up the ship's position roughly.

So far so good; there was no danger of falling in with the land that day, anyway, or even the next, unless the position marked on the chart was utterly in error.

At noon Captain Digby took his sextant on deck, got a flying shot at a meridian altitude, and from that secured a correct latitude, which placed the bark well to the southward. Nichols relinquished his half-formed resolve to declare himself and take over the command, content to watch further developments.

The mate snatched three hours of sorely needed sleep in the afternoon, but when he relieved the deck at four o'clock again a marked change had taken place in his attitude toward the skipper.

By this time the seas were thundering up from the Antarctic, gathering force for their ceaseless assault upon the desolate fangs of "Cape Stiff," hurling the bark from crest to crest like a plaything of Titans. A whole gale shrieked in the rigging; the leescuppers were constantly buried in a maelstrom of hissing foam-curdles; sail was reduced to the merest ribbons of lower tops'ls, close-reefed fores'l, and foretopmast-stays'l. The meager watch shivered in saturated clothing, too wet and cold even to growl.

Nichols clawed his way along the weather-rail, and came to a staggering halt alongside the mate, with a hand clutching desperately at a backstay. Two men fought with the kicking wheel, the effort to keep the bark steady wringing streams of sweat from their contorted bodies. They were the only warm men on deck.

"Coming up with the Horn; aren't we?" shouted Nichols.

"Don't know where we are! Skipper says it's none of my business! Told me I was skulking because I hadn't made the watch scrub decks—in this weather! I'm fed up with it!"

Paul walked to the taffrail and spat savagely into the wake.

"After I'd stood a sixteen-hour spell on deck, too!"

"What's the matter with the skipper, anyhow?" Nichols bawled. "You said something about the last mate."

"Oh! I didn't believe that then; I do now, though. I took the yarn for the grouching of a fired mate against his skipper. He told me—we met up at Tattersall's—that Digby never kept a mate a full voyage; he'd start this game before he was a couple of weeks at sea—slack reliefs, minutes first, then half-hours, until it got to be full watches. You know what that means, Mr. Nichols, with only one mate.

"I'm full right up with it. I joined this hooker, thinking that with only one officer carried promotion would be quicker than in the big clippers. And I wanted badly to stay in wind-jammers and get a command. Don't care a hoot for steam, you know. But this fills my holds to the hatches.

"I'll have to finish the passage, of course, and I'll watch out he gets no chance to spoil my ticket through any fault of mine; but I'll buy a shovel and dig ditches before I try any more of it. Skulker—huh!"

"Don't you think he suffers from headaches, Paul?"

"My foot! It's either booze, dope, or plain laziness, sir! Don't know which, and I don't give a cuss now.

I only hope I don't fall asleep in spite of myself and drown those poor Jack Mucks in the fo'c's'le."

A vicious swirl of wind whipped the mate's sou'wester far out to sea, leaving him bare-headed, with hair streaming out straight like rope-yarns. Nichols edged closer.

"I can keep an eye on her while you get another hat!" he shouted.

"Not for a million! Thanks, all the same," declined Paul. "The old man would come out of his shell in a minute, just for the pleasure of sticking it in the log.

"Officer leave the poop while on watch? Might be done with a white man for skipper—not here!"

"Well, then, take mine. I'll get another."

Nichols passed over his own tarpaulin hat and climbed below.

"Darned shame!" he muttered as he went. "A real good man being spoiled by a crazy jackass!"

He was some time finding another cap that would stay on. On his return to the deck, he found Captain Digby standing by the wheel; the expression on John Paul's face spoke volumes.

There was a glazed film over Digby's eyes; the whites showed blood; his weathered features were distorted into a sneer of contempt. Nichols found shelter in the lee of the mizzenmast until he could rejoin the mate. The skipper's words carried to him on the gale.

"Second time you've let the ship wander off her course. And the bark looks like a pig-boat!"

"Call yourself a mate? Ugh! You spend too much time chawing your fat to that passenger, and I'll stop it! Next time I talk to you about your watch-keeping, it'll be to tell you to take your duds into the fo'c's'le. Understand?"

The skipper lurched into the companionway without noticing Nichols and disappeared below.

The mate's expression was in sharp contrast to that on the faces of the two men at the wheel. It was an unusual

treat for them to hear a chief mate berated as Paul had been. Their mahogany figure-heads were cracked and wrinkled with mirth.

"Send me for'ard!" said Paul with a curse, as Nichols joined him. "Wish he would! But he can't, for all his talk. He's got nobody to bring aft in my shoes.

"But — say! He stinks of brandy fit to choke a camel!

"He'll try his best to get something on me now; then, when we pay off, he'll rip my license to ribbons. The swine! That's what he's after; but I'll watch him!"

"D'you think he'd let me stand watches with you, Paul?" asked Nichols, fully realizing the truth of the mate's suspicions. "I've kept watches, and I'm on the articles as third mate, you know."

"You're likely to be locked in your room if you suggest such a thing to him. He'd swear you interfered with the navigation of the ship. No; I'll see it through now, and just watch out for tricks. I'll be glad, though, to have you sign an entry I shall make in my private log, if he does break me or smudge my ticket."

Captain Digby kept the second dog-watch in his turn, and the passenger remained on the poop throughout the two hours. The skipper took up his short walk from wheel to mizzen-rigging and back, alternating his attention between compass and canvas, defying all attempts to open a conversation. After one or two abortive overtures, Nichols gave it up and planted himself behind a canvas dodger out of the stinging spray.

Again he felt impelled to assert himself as owner, and to force Digby to devote more attention to the navigation of the bark. And once more he decided to wait.

A little consideration warned him of the difficulty he would experience in persuading the skipper of his interest in the vessel; even the mate might smile doubtfully at him. He was ma-

king these trips with a definite object in view, and had not thought of the possibility of having to declare himself at sea. Besides, he was eager now to probe John Paul's make-up to the lowest depths. Moreover, each time he had been on the point of asserting himself, the skipper had turned up on deck, to all appearances in full possession of his faculties, faultless as a seaman.

There was a difference in another direction, however, which decided Nichols to speak the next time occasion arose. Hitherto the mate had shown himself to be a very paragon of mates — an officer who, no matter at what cost to himself, would go about his duty with closed lips, leaving grumbling to the forecabin. Now, under the lash of unjust upbraiding, he had changed — had expressed himself openly and hotly, and to a passenger.

And while Nichols knew that neglect of duty would never justly be charged to John Paul, he also knew that the mate would never again cover any shortcomings of the skipper.

IV.

WITH nightfall the gale hardened. Early in the first watch the foresail was furled. At increasingly frequent intervals a grayback lifted a foaming head over the rail and dropped a few tons of icy sea aboard. The decks were a desolate region of ice-coated planks and stiffened ropes, sprayed by rapidly congealing spindrift, roaring with wet wind.

In the cabin the reek of disturbed bilge-water, lamp-smoke, and all-pervading dampness caught the throat on descending from the wild, fresh air of the deck; the pandemonium of squealing frames, crackling bulkheads, rattle and crash of crockery in the pantry, and, above all, the groaning protest of the mizzenmast, working in its coat, made sleep impossible for any but a hardened seaman.

Tiny streams of moisture condensed

and ran down the overhead beams, formed into glistening globules at the skylight break, and splashed hollowly into the sodden patches they had formed on the table cover beneath. And with the regularity of minute-guns, the distant concussion of a heavy sea at the weather bow was followed by a staggering lurch of the bark, and a racking smash as the shattered gray-back hurled itself in thwarted rage upon the poop bulkhead.

A few hours of sleep in such a racket and reek sufficed for the passenger. Eight bells sounded faintly overhead as he groped for his clothes. Four o'clock in the morning, a sixty-mile gale on deck, the Horn close aboard, and the temperature hovering around fifteen degrees—Nichols grimly smiled as he reflected upon the subtle influence of the sea that drew a man to such a life for choice.

Wrapping himself warmly with comforter, pea-jacket, oilies, and mittens, he hauled his way on deck, watching his chance to dodge out of the door while the bark's stern soared skyward. He felt a glow of pride in the stout, old ship that combated the biting chill of the early morning. He worked his way by laborious stages to the lone patch of light thrown up from the binnacle.

In spite of every sailorly contrivance of relieving tackles, two men were needed to strive with the demon that possessed the wheel—and they strove furiously. The dark figure of the mate was wedged between two stays, an arm hooked around one for support. Nichols joined him.

"Kind of noisy below, Paul!" he shouted. "A little sleep goes a long way, doesn't it?"

"For some people," snapped the mate. "I'd be glad of a little myself."

"Why, hasn't Digby kept the middle watch?"

"No."

"By the gods! This can't go on, Paul. You'll crumple up; then what'll happen? I'll go and see him."

"Wish you luck," laughed the mate bitterly. "I sent a man to call him, and the fellow came back with a bottle-mark on his head. Now his door's locked, and he won't answer. Better stay away."

Again Nichols was on the point of taking matters into his own hands. He decided, however, to wait until breakfast-time, when he would, if necessary, force an entry to Digby's cabin. He glanced at the men struggling with the wheel.

"Look here, Mr. Paul," he said. "You go below and get into dry clothes and drink something hot. I'm a licensed mate, and can look after the bark a while."

"Thanks, Mr. Nichols; no. You may be admiral of the fleet, for all I know. Here you're a passenger; and, though you may be a better seaman than I, you're down on the articles as third mate. If you're what you say, you know as well as I do that a third mate is not licensed to take charge. And you ought to know better than to suggest that the officer in charge leave the deck at a time like this."

"But the circumstances are abnormal, Paul," persisted Nichols. "You need rest, and nobody need know."

"Know? Why, in the middle watch I had to take the lee side of the wheel myself! The old man's watch have seen things; half the swabs I called to the wheel grinned at me and told me that the skipper had excused them from wheel-duty for some piffling reason or another."

"Know! They'd run to him like rabbits if I left the deck for a minute. And you can bet he'd show up like a flash just to gloat. He's looking for the chance. No, thanks!"

"Well, at least let me take the lee wheel for a spell," Nichols urged. "I can do that without bursting the regulations, and I'll be glad of the chance to keep warm."

"Oh, go ahead, then! You can't do worse than those sojers."

The mate gave the permission with

a snort of disgust. Nichols took the lee spokes, passing behind the man he relieved in regular seamanlike fashion. The sailor grinned and scuttled to the shelter of the galley to pass on the tale to his mates.

All the professional in Nichols crept to the surface now. By subtle degrees he felt out the bark, and gradually forced his companion to windward to give and take after him, instead of leading. And the bark steered easier. Even the soured mate noticed the change.

There was a note of unbending in his tone when, at the next relief of the wheel, he assented to Nichols's request that he be allowed to take the weather side. Then the change was complete. A master hand held the bark to her course, taking every advantage of wind and sea to help her climb the crests, easing her in her giddy plunges into the trough.

At five bells the gray dawn half lighted the turmoil of gray seas. Far off in the northern quadrant loomed a darker cloud on the slate-colored horizon that marked the outposts of Cape Stiff. And as the wavering light strengthened, a mile to leeward rose and fell a ragged speck that showed for an instant on the summit of a surge and disappeared from sight. Nichols saw it from a corner of his eye, glanced at the mate, and looked again.

"Sail to loo'ard, Mr. Paul!" he shouted as the speck rose again into view.

"Here's a ship that takes all my attention," retorted Paul shortly.

"Seems to be in trouble," remarked Nichols as a shaft of wintry light touched the object, throwing it into relief against the sky.

"Can't help that. We've troubles of our own. Watch your helm!"

The bark surged nearer, and the stranger grew more visible with advancing daylight. On a long, low, black hull she displayed a row of painted ports in a white streak as she rolled dizzily across the tremendous seas.

One mast alone stood intact; she showed not a rag of sail. Everything above the tops on fore and main masts was stripped; her lower yards thrashed around in awful circles, lifts and braces gone; the three courses streamed from the yards in forlorn wisps of tattered canvas, frozen into horizontal bars by the whistling gale; and in the fore rigging hung a little knot of men.

Her mizzenmast stood entire; thereon a signal was bent, each flag standing out against the leaden sky like a patch of color plastered to the clouds. At the peak her ensign, union down, flung its appeal across the waste of waters; and the two-flag signal at the masthead read:

N. C.

In distress—need assistance.

The ship disappeared from sight time and again as she was swept from end to end by the roaring graybacks leaping like wolves at her flanks. An ominous list to port proclaimed her to be, in all likelihood, a Frisco grain-ship with a shifted cargo; each staggering plunge carried her a peg nearer to the forbidding fangs of Cape Desolation.

"You'll try to help her, won't you, Mr. Paul?" appealed Nichols.

"Sorry, sir; we can do nothing."

"Won't you call the captain? That signal should never be ignored. It's a crime!"

"If he won't come on deck to see to his own safety, he isn't likely to bother with anybody else's."

"Call a hand to the wheel, Mr. Paul," Nichols demanded, a snap of fire in his eyes. "I'll fetch the skipper up."

The mate himself took the spokes, and Nichols went below. Paul peered through the flying scud at the vessel now close to, and for an instant his face softened in pity. Then his jaw hardened; he turned away, muttering under his breath, and kept his eyes on his own ship. In five minutes Nichols rejoined him.

"Well?"

The mate's query was accompanied with a sickly smile.

"Hopeless!" snapped Nichols. "Drunk as a clown! Says he's sick—that you're in charge of the deck—you can do as you like. He laughed, Paul. Is he crazy?"

"Yes—like a fox! Do as I like!"

Paul's laugh was unpleasant.

"And he'll watch me. No, sir! I don't heave to in this sea and give him the chance he's looking for, for all the sinking ships in the seven seas!"

"Then listen, Mr. Paul. You're right, so far; but there are people in danger on that vessel, and I won't see them left to drown. Nor would you, if you were yourself.

"I tell you, now, that I'm the owner of this bark—your employer—and I authorize you to place Captain Digby under restraint. You're to take command, and I'll act as mate until we get home. Now act as a seaman toward that vessel!"

John Paul gazed straight into Nichols's face and laughed outright—a contemptuous laugh, devoid of mirth.

"And what 'll be your next promotion, Mr. Nichols?" he derided. "First you'd kept a watch—next you were a licensed mate—now owner! No, sir! It's the wrong time to spring that joke."

Nichols's face darkened with rising anger. The mate turned to look at the derelict and but partially smothered a groan as a sweeping comber buried her half-way to the lower mast-heads. The little cluster of figures that had hung in the fore rigging vanished with that sea.

"Let me take a boat, then," persisted Nichols, every drop of blood in him protesting against desertion of these people.

Again the wreck plunged deep into the hell-broth of waters; she emerged with her list accentuated to a perilous degree. The few figures visible on her reeling decks gesticulated frantically to the bark. The mate's eyes clouded;

he peered anxiously along his own decks.

"If you could get even four men to volunteer, sir, I'd let you try, and Digby be blowed! But you couldn't."

Nichols took the word as an assent, sprang down the slippery ladder, and approached a knot of men watching the derelict from the rail. They met him with negative grins, secure in the conviction that the mate dared not order them to go. Nichols slowly mounted to the poop again, reported his failure, and turned with aching heart to seaward.

Paul snatched furtive glances at the ship, too. Through the mask of stubbornness that he had assumed glowed shame for himself, and a conflict with his better self. He applied himself anew to the compass, starting as from a reverie at Nichols's tense voice.

"Paul! For Heaven's sake don't leave them. There's a woman with a kiddy aboard there! There—see?—lashed to the mizzen fife-rail!"

Paul looked. He hesitated just ten seconds. Then with a rush that suffused his frowning face with a healthy glow, all the clean salt in his blood, all the seamanship in his being surged to the surface. He shouted orders, and every man who heard knew it was a different John Paul they must deal with.

"Here, take the wheel again, Mr. Nichols!"

Then, springing to the poop-rail, Paul roared through the storm:

"Foretops'l to the mast! Jump now!"

"Wheel, there! Watch her!"

The heavy, ice-bound canvas thrashed and thundered to the mast, shaking the fabric of the ship as if to shatter her to staves. Under the awful pressure of the backed sail she lurched down to leeward until the rail vanished in a roaring avalanche of green seas.

For a half-minute portentous of disaster she hung helpless; then under the skilful hand of Nichols she came up, righted, and slowly took up a snug

position, bowing the seas, rising and falling with a longer, steadier sweep, her way stopped.

The mate was already busy among the watch below, listening to no whining, no argument. In place of words to skulkers he used an honest fist heartily applied, and the light in his eyes testified that his soul was in his task.

"Port life-boat away!" he yelled, springing to the gripes.

Cuffing, kicking, using language that was strange on his lips, the mate lashed the crew into action. The boat was raised out of the chocks, swung outboard, and lowered to the level of the rail.

"Volunteers, now! Lively!" Paul snapped, gazing around at a crowd of sullen faces.

Nobody stepped forward. He sprang into their midst, his eyes aflame, an iron belaying-pin in his fist.

"Six volunteers! Quick!" and the weapon fell fast.

A youngster, the butt of the fo'c's'le, pushed through the rabble and climbed into the boat, his peaked face ashine with a spirit vaster than his skinny frame.

"Thank you, Griggs," nodded the mate, and turned afresh upon the rest.

"You skulking scum!" he sneered. "Let a kid like that show you the way! Call yourselves men? Come! Two more and we'll try it!"

"You swine! And there's a woman aboard there—none of *you* rats ever had a mother!—and there's a kiddy. God help the kiddies that call *you* father!"

Like whipped dogs one after another four shamed seamen crawled into the boat. Then the spirit gripped the rest; the boat might have been doubly manned now, but some were needed aboard the bark.

"That'll do, men," Paul shouted, taking his place in the boat. "Take orders from Mr. Nichols unless the captain comes on deck. Lower away! Lively now!"

The falls creaked in the frozen blocks and the boat hung poised, waiting for a sea to meet her. As the men paused a hoarse voice howled from the poop. Captain Digby, flushed, disheveled, fury expressed in every deep line of his face, appeared at the top of the ladder.

"Bring that boat aboard! Paul! I'll break you for this! I'll—"

"Lower away! Lower away!" gritted Paul through set teeth.

The licking crest of a sea rumbled along the boat's keel; she quivered; a terrific grayback lifted her level with the rail again; the hooks released themselves, and she was water-borne.

"Give way!" roared the mate, cool as ice now, bark, skipper, and certain disrating swept from his mind.

At the wheel Nichols kept one eye on the skipper, and the other on the dancing speck that fought for every inch of distance to the distressed ship. Now hoisted high on the crown of a surge, the next moment plunged with a sickening swoop into a bowl of seething fury, the life-boat made slow and painful progress, nursed past every sea by the hand of a master.

For several moments Captain Digby stood irresolute, shaking with drunken rage. He glanced blearily aloft at the trim of the yards, then aft at the wheel, where he saw Nichols. He started toward the stern; the passenger slipped a becket over the spokes in readiness for trouble.

"Get āway from that wheel!" snarled Digby, lurching heavily. "You're a passenger, and I'll show you your place. Get below!"

"I'm holding her all right, captain," expostulated Nichols. "She's hove to and needs little wheel."

"Hove to, eh? Well, she isn't going to stay hove to, mister."

Digby turned toward the main-deck and bawled:

"Hand to the wheel, here! And fill away on the foretops'l! I'm skipper here!"

"She stays hove to!" snapped

Nichols, coming to a decision justified by extremity. "You'll not touch a brace, sir!"

Digby's huge frame gathered into a bunch of malignity; his eyes glittered with the light of alcoholic madness. Pulling a revolver from his pocket, he shoved it into Nichols's face, while the newly aroused seamen stared aghast.

Nichols took time by the forelock, left the wheel, and dived at the skipper's legs, bringing him heavily to the deck. The fall stunned Digby; he lay as still as a log, his mouth wide open. Calling a couple of men aft, the passenger rapidly lashed Digby's hands and feet and picked up the revolver.

"Here, men!" he ordered, in no hurry to put the pistol out of sight. "Take Captain Digby to his cabin. Don't be afraid of him—I'm the owner of this bark, and Mr. Paul is going to take command. Get him below, now, quick; then watch out for the boat."

The men obeyed, muttering in amazement. Nichols returned to the wheel and scanned the sea for the boat. He saw the tiny speck bobbing like a cork under the ship's stern. The vessel was lurching with a drunken stagger that bewildered the eye; her long lower yards flogged the sea on both sides like grim flails as she dipped her rail; but at her spanker—boom a tackle hung, and to it a basket. The little group of forlorn figures on her deck was less by half.

Half an hour of tension passed, then a scattered cheer went up from the Montauk's decks as the boat dropped astern of the ship, heading back to the bark. If the outward journey had been perilous this fight to win home against the weltering seas was heroic. The deeply laden boat rode heavily, her gunwales barely showed above the licking wave-tops; her oarsmen were arm-weary with the struggle.

Twice men of the rescued crew took spells at the oars; but they, too, were weary—wearied from days of battling against death—so their help was weak.

Nichols saw John Paul give up the tiller to another and lend the energy of two men to the fagged-out rowers; still progress was increasingly laborious and slow.

"Fill away foretops'!!" shouted Nichols, casting the becket from the wheel.

The men saw the necessity, and obeyed.

"Round in weather braces! Handsome lads—so! Belay that!"

The bark ran off the wind and gathered way toward the laboring boat. With the gale behind her she crashed through the seas like a live leviathan, the foam boiling at her bows clear to the figurehead.

"Forebraces!" barked Nichols, and brought the bark round to windward of the boat, giving her a smooth lee. "Stand by with your lines! Watch out now!"

Lines snaked out from the soaring bark, eager hands caught on, and in a few moments tired men were helping others more tired to security. John Paul climbed aboard unaided, tenderly carrying a bundle of blankets upon which a wan-eyed woman bent a solicitous face.

The mate gave her the bundle. She uncovered one end, and a tiny voice from inside gurgled whatever is babyese for "All's well!"

Then John Paul smiled through the crusted brine on his haggard face—the smile that had shone there when he first stood on the Montauk's deck an eager, ambitious young mate. He climbed to the poop, where Nichols greeted him warmly.

"Paul," Nichols said, "you've done a piece of work to-day that is its own reward to a fellow like you. When you started you thought you were losing all by it, didn't you?"

"Guess I have lost all so far as my berth and prospects are concerned," replied the mate, his face clouding for an instant.

Then the smile came back as he added:

"But I suppose I'd have hated myself to the end of time if I hadn't let you drive me into going, sir. I'm satisfied. Suppose I'd better go and face it out now. Where's the old man?"

Nichols beamed with genuine pleasure, now that he had sounded the true depths of the mate. He laid a hand on Paul's arms.

"I tied Captain Digby up," he explained, "and had him locked in his room."

"You—did—*what!*" gasped Paul. eyes and mouth gaping wide.

"Yes, he was going to fill away and leave you. So I stopped him. He showed a pistol, and for the safety of the ship I took it away and put him under restraint."

"But — you — It's mutiny, sir! How will you—"

"What I told you is true, Mr. Paul," smiled the owner. "I really own the bark; I bought the Crescent Line for a hobby. Wanted to try remedies for some seamen's grievances, you know. First one will be that I'll allow no earnest young officer to be broken by a drunken skipper; next I think we'll carry two mates; afterward with the right man in command, the men in the forecabin will be better looked after—better grub and better quarters."

"And to start right you'll take the Montauk home, and I'll act as your mate. And when Digby has taken satisfaction out of us— Well, I hardly think it will be necessary for you to buy that shovel, Paul."

The Padded Sell



by George Armstrong

IT was a hot night in August. Possibly that was one explanation for the touch of asperity in the voice and mien of Oscar Legg, operatic tenor—in vaudeville for the summer—as he finally deposited a heavy suit-case at the door of Mabel Leach's dressing-room.

"Good gosh, kid, what you got in there—scrap-iron?" he gasped, removing his brown derby and dabbing

the perspiration from his forehead and denuded scalp.

Mabel Leach's big, helpless blue eyes surveyed the attenuated face and figure of the operatic tenor in a kind of bovine astonishment.

"No; it ain't scrap-iron, Oscar—" she began.

Instantly her consort's asperity deepened into explosive anger.

"Say, look here, you! How often

I got t' tell you not t' call me 'Oscar' when we're inside the theater?"

Mabel's eyes opened wider.

"Well, you never tol' me what you *did* want—"

"The minute we're past the stage-door I'm Ricardo. Ricardo—d' y' understand?"

His indignation still ran high.

"Oscar!" he mimicked scornfully.

Mabel sadly picked up the offending suit-case and reached for the door-knob.

"I don't know what's ever got into you, Osc—"

She stopped in the nick of time.

"Ricardo," she corrected herself hastily. "You ain't been you'self wif me this las' week or more."

Oscar regarded with distaste the tiny drops of perspiration that glistened from her heavy face. He wondered how he could ever have found her attractive.

"I s'pose you'll be wantin' that thing lugged back after the show," he growled—that is, in so far as an operatic tenor can truthfully be said to growl.

Mabel nodded, and her companion threw a second glance of bitter resentment at the suit-case.

Oscar's custody of the suit-case was of course a circumstance highly charged with significance. For to carry a lady's luggage—if the lady be a member of your troupe—is to admit to the theatrical world the soft impeachment of feminine entanglement. You can attend your lady to and from the theater—and even to the train—all season long if you want to, and not one of your fellow Thespians shall even whisper against you. But the moment you carry her suit-case, even half a block, you are "pulling off a sketch with her," and the whole company knows it.

Just then approached chubby Harry McCoy—of the McCoy-Nichols team—with whom Oscar shared a dressing-room. Mabel Leach's goodly figure promptly disappeared.

"You an' your dame fightin' again?" inquired McCoy casually as he led the way to their quarters.

"Nothing special," returned the operatic tenor—in vaudeville for the summer. "You know what the women are."

"Um-huh!" sympathized McCoy.

He closed the door and began unbuttoning his vest.

"How long you been pullin' off your sketch with her?"

"Jus' since I broke into th' two-a-day stuff. 'Tis only Platonic."

McCoy ceased his cold-cream massage long enough to look incredulous.

"Sure!" he grinned. "They all are."

Oscar protested disgustedly.

"You don't think I'm in love with *her*!"

McCoy looked non-committal.

"A man gets lonesome on these long trips," extenuated the tenor. "First thing he knows he gets sort of attached t' some girl or other—don't make much difference who. You know how 'tis yourself."

By this time Oscar had stripped and was rapidly sheathing his meager figure in what at first glance appeared to be a heavily padded, two-piece suit of underwear.

"Say," commented McCoy, busy with grease-paint, "don't them darn symmetricals give you rheumatism?"

"Do they?"

Oscar paused, one leg in the symmetricals, the other out, by way of melancholy emphasis.

"I get it so bad every winter I can't hardly walk. An' think of wearin' underwear two inches thick in the middle of August!"

"Darned if I'd do it!" pitied McCoy, doing his eyes.

"You'd have to if you was playin' *Faust* an' had legs like broomsticks!"

Oscar looked ruefully down at his own inconsiderable shanks.

"They'd look fine in tights without any symmetricals—wouldn't they?"

McCoy laughed heartlessly.

"You wouldn't make no hit with *Marguerite* that way," he agreed.

"Say," he continued suddenly a moment later, "have you spotted the flapper in the right lower box?"

By now Oscar's angular outlines had become merged into the more flattering contours of the protuberant symmetricals. Over them he was drawing on a pair of scarlet tights.

"Flapper?" he interrogated. "No; I didn't see her."

"She's been here to every matinée this week—an' las' night, too. Maybe to-night, for all I know. Always sits alone in that same box: Wears a toque an' pinkish blouse."

Oscar looked contemplative.

"An' listen!" pursued McCoy. "'Fiddle-fiend'—No. 2, y' know—says to me he figured he was the fair-haired boy with her. But, say! She wouldn't even look at 'm. Now he says you're the lucky guy!"

"Me?"

Oscar stared at his roommate in genuine astonishment.

"Yes, you! Awful surprised, ain't you?" McCoy winked.

"Say, bo, if *I* was a tenor like you I'd have a new queen every week, I would."

Oscar Legg positively blushed. In spite of the case-hardening of fifteen years as a more or less heroic tenor, he still suffered from an acute shyness toward women—particularly attractive women. It had even taken four weeks for him to get acquainted with Mabel Leach—and Mabel was not terrifying in her feminine charm. The possibility that any soul within a pinkish blouse could have "fallen for him," as McCoy would have phrased it, was most disquieting. Not unpleasantly disquieting, understand. On the contrary, most delightfully disquieting.

He rose and donned a close-fitting doublet.

"Hones', you look swell," praised McCoy, enviously surveying Oscar's brawny chest, bulging biceps, and

sturdy legs. "I don't blame the women. You're a reg'lar Mordkin!"

Oscar shook his head.

"It ain't worth the wear and tear."

McCoy took his leave, while Oscar proceeded to apply a wig to his pate and a trim mustache to his upper lip.

McCoy's act came fourth on the week's bill, under the caption:

HARRY MCCOY

and the

NICHOLS SISTERS

In a Melange of Clever Musical Nonsense
Vaudeville's Most Artistic Comedy Act

The "mélange" was done "in one." Oscar, his heart beating faster than usual, presently stole to the peephole in the middle of the drop. His gaze swept to the boxes on the right.

All at once he stopped breathing.

There, quite alone in the recesses of the forward box, was the pinkish blouse! And the toque!

All the other boxes were occupied to the limit of their capacity. The wearer of the blouse had purchased the entire box for her solitary vigil.

"Ca-hum an' la-huv yo' bay-hay-hay-by!" vociferated McCoy and the blond Nichols Sisters, pirouetting toward the wings. Apparently Vaudeville's Most Artistic Comedy Act was approaching a conclusion; but Oscar remained unmindfully at his point of vantage, feasting his eyes on the pink blouse. Could it be possible, after all, he wondered, that she—

"Clear stage!" bawled some one.

Dazedly he reached the wings.

His was the next act—billed as:

THE FLORENTINE GRAND OPERA COMPANY

A Galaxy of Famous Artists Gleaned from the
Capitals of Europe

Presenting a Tabloid Version of Gounod's
Immortal Masterpiece, "Faust"

Oscar—who as yet had never set eyes on Europe—appeared in the cast

of characters as *Faust* under the name of Ricardo Palermo.

The curtain rose upon the famous garden scene. Contrary to tradition, a straggling chorus of villagers advanced from the wings. Among the women appeared the undisguisable figure of Mabel Leach. Like all unattractive chorus girls, she made herself as conspicuous as possible.

The villagers sang in remarkably good English, considering their European origin. After the opening chorus they disappeared. Then ensued *Marguerite's* song. Her departure into the unpretentious cottage was the cue for Oscar's appearance.

Was he mistaken in daring to think that the pink blouse leaned forward in the box with greater interest as he came striding on the scene—a magnificent figure of a man? A first short recitative over, he began his big aria. Out of the corner of his eye he scrutinized that right-forward box without respite. He even deviated from his customary "business" so that he could deliver the dashing climax within a few short feet of where she sat.

And yet he could not be certain. Beyond doubt, his song held her deeply interested. But she made not the slightest movement. He had hoped that she would give him some sign—some earnest that she understood and appropriated unto herself his impassioned utterance. In this he was grievously disappointed, for she remained quite inscrutable.

What he could see of her face in the recesses of the box suggested refinement and beauty. Her general atmosphere was deliciously feminine.

His singing got over even more successfully than usual; he was compelled to return to the stage twice, amid unrestrained applause. He hardly heard the demonstration. His faculties were saturated with a vision of a pink blouse.

In his room on the dressing-table lay a note.

Upon the envelope was inscribed in a generous hand:

"SIG. RICARDO PALERMO."

And when his uncertain fingers had torn it open there appeared upon a gilt-edged card the following:

You have wonderful temperament and a magnificent voice. May I hope some time to meet you?

That was all; but he had never known so ardent a thrill.

Determined, he sought stationery:

To-night in the foyer at—

He glanced at his watch. It was not yet ten.

10.15—before the crowd comes.

PALERMO.

He despatched a call-boy with the note—and a heavy bribe for celerity.

Returning to his dressing-room, he almost collided with Mabel Leach.

"Goin' t' have some chop suey after the show?" she inquired pleadingly.

Never before had she seemed so ungainly, so unalluring.

"No," he answered shortly. "An' I can't carry that suit-case of yours to-night, either."

"W'y, Oscar—I mean Ricardo!" she cried, distress in her blue eyes.

The leading tenor's implacability wavered. After all, Mabel had been a good pal. She had sewed on innumerable buttons for him—even mended two or three pairs of his stockings, all with radiant cheerfulness. And once, when he had been ill, she had sat up with him two nights in succession and nursed him.

"Important business!" he flung out, and fled to his room.

A moment later he reappeared on the stage for his duel with *Valentine*. Anxiously he waited for the pink blouse's response to his note. In fact, so little heed did he give to the duel that he was all but slain by *Valentine* on three separate occasions.

Not until his adversary lay dying at his feet did he see her nod her toque-crowned head—ever so slightly.

In swarmed the indignant villagers, and two minutes later down came the drop.

It was precisely ten o'clock when Oscar reached his dressing-room. Frantically he tore off his costume. It seemed to him that fate had decreed against the tryst. One vexing delay succeeded another. Never had those accursed symmetricals adhered to his lean limbs so tenaciously!

His imagination played like lightning about the mysterious lady. She was no mere stage-struck girl—he was sure of that. There was no doubting her elegance, her temperamental charm. A little unconventional, perhaps, but then—

Fifteen minutes past ten! Oscar did not even pause for a final glance into the mirror. But in the quarter-hour that had elapsed he had shrunk from herculean proportions to those of a lath.

Hastily he pulled the dressing-door closed behind him; sped past the amazed "Whirlwinds of the Arabian Desert," grouped in the wings, and bolted out of the stage entrance. It had been hot enough inside, but the alley without seemed a veritable oven. The heat still rose in quivering waves.

He achieved the first corner, then the second. And now the foyer, studded with rows of frosted electric bulbs, lay just before him. Within its portals awaited the pink blouse—and enchantment!

Oscar inhaled a deep breath and entered.

Opposite the deserted box-office stood a lady, fashionably attired in a pink blouse and toque. The rest of her apparel Oscar could not possibly have described to you.

As he approached he saw that the lady was indeed beautiful—with a kind of peremptory beauty.

He lifted his brown derby and assumed his most ingratiating smile. Simultaneously he executed what Harry McCoy would have termed his best "limousine bow."

But the lady remained statuesquely imperious. Her eyes flitted from the baldness of Oscar's head to the extreme attenuation of his form, which his linen suit treacherously failed to cloak.

"And who are you?" demanded the lady with more than a suspicion of hauteur in her tone.

She didn't recognize him. He gasped in sheer stupefaction.

"Who—me?" he stammered. "Why, I—I'm—"

A flash of comprehension illuminated the lady's lovely eyes.

"Ah, yes!" she said. "You come from Signor Palermo? You are his valet?"

Out of the reeling chaos of Oscar's consciousness came a flood of understanding. He strove for speech.

"Ah, yes!" he finally replied with a collectedness that rivaled the lady's. "Signor Palermo desired me to say that he would be here in another five minutes."

He bowed low and took his leave.

Mabel Leach, faring forth from her dressing-room with the troubled expression still in her eyes, and the offending suit-case in her hand, looked up to behold Oscar guarding the threshold. Without a word he reclaimed the suit-case.

"But I thought you said—" began Mabel in her phlegmatic way.

"'Tis all off," he explained, and swung the stage-door open for her. "How about a little chop suey?"

Mabel exclaimed her glad surprise.

"It'd be jus' fine, Oscar!"

Panic-stricken, she stopped.

"Oh, I'm awful sorry! I didn't mean t' call you Oscar again—never!"

They were passing the foyer. The heroic tenor permitted his glance to alight for an instant upon an imperious toque and an impatient pink blouse.

"Oh, that's all right, Mabel!" he replied indulgently. "Le's forget it!"

And he felt her hand tighten its hold on his arm.

The Desert Crucible



By Zane Grey

Author of "The Heritage of the Desert," "Riders of the Purple Sage," "The Light of Western Stars," "The Lone Star Ranger," "The Last of the Duanes," etc.

A FIVE-PART STORY—PART FIVE.

THE PLOT OF THE STORY TO DATE.

FAY LARKIN, arrested for the murder of Waggoner, king of the cattle-rustlers, was rescued by her lover, John Shefford, a young man who came to the great desert of the Southwest in order to overcome his soul-sickness—in order to find himself.

The Navajo, Nas Ta Bega, undertook to guide them across the desert to Nonnezoshe Boco—the mysterious, wonderful cañon of the Rainbow Bridge—where they were to be met by the cowboy, Joe Lake, with a flat-boat. Thence they planned to float down the Grand Cañon of the Colorado to safety—a desperate undertaking. Shefford's party also included Fay's adoptive mother, Jane Withersteen, and her old friend, "Uncle Jim" Lassiter, who was a wonderful gunman in his day, but whom circumstances had deprived of firearms for twelve years.

When in sight of the Nonnezoshe Boco the Navajo discovered that they were being trailed by a gang of outlaws headed by the half-breed Shadd, a friend of the murdered rustler.

"The hardest-riding outfit in the country!" exclaimed Shefford. "We can't get away from them!"

Shefford drew his rifle out of the saddle-sheath and a pair of big cowboy's revolvers from the saddle-bag.

"Here, Lassiter; maybe you haven't forgotten how to use these," he said.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAIL TO NONNEZOSHE.

THE old gunman started as if he had seen ghosts. His hands grew claw-like as he reached for the guns. He threw open the cylinders, spilled out the shells, snapped back the cylinders.

Then he went through motions too swift for Shefford to follow. But Shefford heard the hammers falling so swiftly that they blended their clicks almost in one sound.

Lassiter reloaded the guns with a speed comparable with the other actions. A remarkable transformation had come over him. He did not seem the same man. The mild eyes had changed; the long, shadowy, sloping lines were tense cords; and there was a cold, ashy shade on his face.

"Twelve years!" he muttered to himself. "I dropped them old guns back where I rolled the rock. Twelve years!"

Shefford realized that to Lassiter the twelve years were as if they had never

been. And he would rather have had this old gunman with him than a dozen ordinary men.

The Indian spoke rapidly in Navajo, saying that once in the rocks they were safe. Then, after another look at the distant dust-puffs, he wheeled his mustang.

It was doubtful if the party could have kept near him had they been responsible for the gait of their mounts. The fact was that the way the Indian called to his mustang, or some leadership in the one he rode, drew the others to a like trot or climb or canter.

For a long time Shefford did not turn round; he knew what to expect. And when he did turn, he was startled at the gain made by the pursuers.

But he was encouraged as well by the looming red, rounded peaks seemingly now so close. He could see the dark splits between the sloping, curved walls, the piñon-patches in the amphitheater under the circled walls. That was a wild place they were approaching, and once in there he believed pursuit would be useless.

However, there were miles to go still, and those hard-riding demons behind made alarming decrease in the intervening distance. Shefford could see the horses plainly now. How they made the dust fly! He counted up to six — and then the dust and moving line caused the others to be indistinguishable.

At last only a long, gently rising slope separated the fugitives from that labyrinthine network of wildly carved rock. But it was the clear air that made the distance seem short. Mile after mile the mustangs climbed; and when they were perhaps halfway across that last slope to the rocks, the first horse of the pursuers mounted to the level behind. In a few moments the whole band was strung out in sight.

Nas Ta Bega kept his mustang at a steady walk, in spite of the gaining pursuers. There came a point, however, when the Indian, reaching comparatively level ground, put his mount to a swinging canter. The other mustangs broke into the same gait.

It became a race then, with the couple of miles between fugitives and pursuers only imperceptibly lessened. Nas Ta Bega had saved his mustangs, and Shadd

had ridden his to the limit. Shefford kept looking back, gripping his rifle, hoping it would not come to a fight, yet slowly losing that reluctance.

Sage began to show on the slope, and other kinds of brush and cedars straggled everywhere! The great rocks loomed closer; the red color mixed with yellow; and the slopes lengthened out — not so steep, yet infinitely longer than they had seemed at a distance.

Shefford ceased to feel the dry wind in his face. They were already in the lee of the wall. He could see the rock-squirrels scampering to their holes. The mustangs valiantly held to the gait, and at last the Indian disappeared between two rounded corners of cliff. The others were close behind.

Shefford wheeled once more. Shadd and his gang were a mile in the rear, but coming fast, despite winded horses.

Shefford rode around the wall into a widening space thick with cedars. It ended in a bare slope of smooth rock. Here the Indian dismounted. When the others came up with him, he told them to lead their horses and follow. Then he began the ascent of the rock.

It was smooth and hard, though not slippery. There was not a crack. Shefford did not see a broken piece of stone. Nas Ta Bega climbed straight up for a while, and then wound around a swell, to turn this way and that, always going up.

Shefford began to see similar mounds of rock all around him, of every shape that could be called a curve. There were yellow domes far above and small red domes far below. Ridges ran from one hill of rock to another. There were no abrupt breaks, but holes and pits and caves were everywhere, and occasionally, deep down, an amphitheater green with cedar and piñon.

The Indian appeared to have a clear idea of where he wanted to go, though there was no vestige of a trail on those bare slopes. At length Shefford was high enough to see back upon the plain, but the pursuers were no longer in sight.

Nas Ta Bega led to the top of that wall, only to disclose to his followers another and a higher wall beyond, with a ridged, bare, wild, and scalloped depression between. Here footing began to be precarious for both man and beast.

When the ascent of the second wall began, it was necessary to zigzag up, slowly and carefully, taking advantage of every level bulge or depression. They must have consumed half an hour mounting this slope to the summit. Once there, Shefford drew a sharp breath, with both backward and forward glances.

Shadd and his gang, in single file, showed dark upon the bare stone ridge behind. And to the fore there twisted and dropped and curved the most dangerous slopes Shefford had ever seen. The fugitives had reached the height of stone wall of the divide, and many of the drops upon this side were perpendicular and too steep to see the bottom.

Nas Ta Bega led along the ridge-top and then started down, following the waves in the rock. He came out upon a round promontory, from which there could not have been any turning of a horse. The long slant leading down was at an angle Shefford declared impossible for the animals. Yet the Indian started down. His mustang needed urging, but at last edged upon the steep descent. Shefford and the others had to hold back.

It was thrilling to see the intelligent mustang. He did not step; he slid his forehoofs a few inches at a time and kept directly behind the Indian. If he fell he would knock Nas Ta Bega off his feet, and they would both roll down together. There was no doubt in Shefford's mind that the mustang knew this as well as the Indian.

Foot by foot they worked down to a swelling bulge, and here Nas Ta Bega left his mustang and came back for the pack-horse. It was even more difficult to get this beast down. Then the Indian called for Lassiter and Jane and Fay to make the descent.

Shefford, who had begun to keep a sharp lookout behind and above, did not see how the three fared on the slope, but evidently there was no mishap. Nas Ta Bega mounted the slope again, and at the moment sight of Shadd's dark bays silhouetted against the sky caused Shefford to call out:

"We've got to hurry!"

The Indian led one mustang and called to the others. Shefford stepped close behind. They went down in single file, inch by inch, foot by foot, and safely reached the comparative level below.

"Shadd's gang are riding their horses up and down these walls!" exclaimed Shefford.

"Shore," replied Lassiter.

Both the women were silent.

Nas Ta Bega led the way swiftly to the right. He rounded a huge dome, climbed a low, rolling ridge, descended and ascended, and came out upon the rim of a steep-walled amphitheater. Along the rim was a yard-wide level, with the chasm to the left and steep slope to the right. There was no time to flinch at the danger, when an even greater danger menaced from the rear.

Nas Ta Bega led, and his mustang kept at his heels. One misstep would have plunged the animal to his death; but he was sure-footed, and his confidence helped the others.

At the apex of the curve the only course led away from the rim, and here there was no level. Four of the mustangs slipped and slid down the smooth rock until they stopped in a shallow depression. It cost time to get them out, to straighten pack and saddles. Shefford thought he heard a yell in the rear, but he could not see anything of the gang.

They rounded this precipice only to face a worse one. Shefford's nerve was sorely tried when he saw steep slants everywhere, all apparently leading down into chasms, and no place where a man, let alone a horse, could put a foot with safety.

Nevertheless, the imperturbable Indian never slackened his pace. Always he appeared to find a way, and he never had to turn back. His winding course, however, did not now cover much distance in a straight line, and herein lay the greatest peril. Any moment Shadd and his men might come within range.

Upon a particularly tedious and dangerous side of rocky hill the fugitives lost so much time that Shefford grew exceedingly alarmed. Still, they accomplished it without accident, and their pursuers did not heave in sight. Perhaps they were having trouble in a bad place.

The afternoon was waning. The red sun hung low above the yellow mesa to the left, and there was a perceptible shading of light.

At last Nas Ta Bega came to a place that halted him. It did not look so bad as places they had successfully passed;

yet upon closer study, Shefford did not see how they were to get around the neck of the gully at their feet. Presently the Indian put the bridle over the head of his mustang and left him free. He did likewise for two more mustangs, while Lassiter and Shefford rendered a like service to theirs.

Then the Indian started down, with his mustang following him. The pack-animal came next; then Fay on Shefford's regular mount, Nack-yal; then Lassiter and his mount, with Jane and hers next, and Shefford next. They followed the Indian, picking their steps swiftly, looking nowhere except at the stone under their feet. The right side of the chasm was rimmed, the curve at the head crossed, and then the real peril of this trap had to be faced. It was a narrow slant of ledge, doubling back parallel with the course already traversed.

A sharp, warning cry from Nas Ta Bega scarcely prepared Shefford for hoarse yells, followed by a rattling rifle-volley from the top of the slope opposite. Bullets thudded on the cliff, whipped up red dust, and spanged and droned away.

Fay Larkin screamed and staggered back against the wall. Nack-yal was hit; with frightened snort he reared, pawed the air, and came down, pounding the stone. The mustang behind him went to his knees, sank with his head over the rim, and, slipping off, plunged into the depths. In an instant a dull crash came up.

For a moment there was imminent peril for the horses—more in the yawning hole than in the spanging of badly aimed bullets. Lassiter drew Jane up a little slope, out of the way of the frightened mustangs; and Shefford, risking his neck, rushed to Fay. She was holding her arm, which was bleeding. Unheeding the rain of bullets, he half carried, half dragged her along the slope of the low bluff, where he hid behind a corner till the Indian drove the mustangs round it.

Fay had sustained a wound to her arm. Shefford's swift fingers were wet and red with her blood when he had bound the injury with his scarf. Lassiter had got around with Jane, and was calling to Shefford to hurry.

It had been Shefford's idea to halt there and fight. But he did not want to

send Fay on alone, so he hurried ahead with her. The Indian had the horses going fast on a long level, overhung by bulging walls. Lassiter and Jane were looking back. Shefford, becoming aware of a steep slope to his left, looked down to see a tremendous, narrow chasm, great crevices in split cliffs, and bunches of cedars—a wild and ragged place.

Presently Nas Ta Bega disappeared with the mustangs. He had evidently turned off to go down behind the split cliffs. Shefford and Fay caught up with Lassiter and Jane, and panting, hurrying, looking backward and then forward, they kept on as best they could to the Indian's course. Shefford made sure they had lost him when he appeared down to the left.

Then they all ran to catch up with him. They went around the chasm, and then through one of the narrow cracks, to come out upon the rim, among cedars. Here the Indian waited for them. He pointed down another long swell of naked stone to a narrow, green split, which was evidently different from all these curved pits and holes and abysses, for this one had straight walls and wound away out of sight. It was the head of a cañon.

"Nonnezoshe Boco," said the Indian.

"Nas Ta Bega, go on!" replied Shefford. "When Shadd comes out on that slope above he can't see you—where you go down. Hurry on with the horses and women. Lassiter, you go with them. And if Shadd passes me and comes up with you—do your best. I'm going to ambush that Piute and his gang."

"Shore you've picked out a good place," replied Lassiter.

In another moment Shefford was alone. He heard the light, soft pat and slide of the hoofs of the mustangs as they went down. Presently that sound ceased.

He looked at the red stain on his hands—from the blood of the girl he loved. And he had to stifle a terrible wrath that shook his frame. In regard to Shadd's pursuit, it had not been blood that he had feared, but capture for Fay.

He and Nas Ta Bega might have expected a shot if they resisted; but to wound that unfortunate girl—it made a tiger out of him!

When he had stilled the emotions that

weakened and shook him, and reached cold and implacable control of himself, he crawled under the cedars to the rim, and, well hidden, he watched and waited.

Shadd appeared to be slow for the first time since he had been sighted. With keen eyes Shefford watched the corner where he and the others had escaped from that murderous volley. But Shadd did not come.

The sun had lost its warmth, and was tipping the lofty mesa to his right. Soon twilight would make travel on those walls more perilous, and darkness would make it impossible. Shadd must hurry, or abandon the pursuit for that day. Shefford found himself grimly hopeful.

Suddenly he heard the click of hoofs. It came faint, yet clear, on the still air. He glued his sight upon that corner where he expected the pursuers to appear. More cracks of hoofs pierced his ear, clearer and sharper this time.

Presently he gathered that they could not possibly come from beyond the corner he was watching. So he looked far to the left of that place, seeing no one; then far to the right. Out over a bulge of stone he caught sight of the bobbing head of a horse—then another—and still another.

He was astounded. Shadd had gone below that place where the attack had been made and had come up this steep slope. More horses appeared—to the number of eight. Shefford easily recognized a low, broad, squat rider to be Shadd. Assuredly the Piute did not know this country.

Possibly, however, he had feared an ambush. Soon, however, Shefford grew convinced that Shadd had not expected an ambush, or at least did not fear it, but had only mistaken the Indian's course. Moreover, if he led his gang a few rods farther up that slope he would do worse than make a mistake—he would be facing a double peril.

What fearless horsemen these Indians were! Shadd was mounted, as were three others of his gang. Evidently the white men, the outlaws, were the ones on foot.

Shefford thrilled, and his veins stung when he saw these pursuers come passing what he considered the danger-mark. But manifestly they could not see their danger. Assuredly they were aware of

the chasm; however, the level upon which they were advancing narrowed gradually, and they could not tell that very soon they could not go any farther, nor could they turn back. The alternative was to climb the slope, and that was a desperate chance.

They came up, now about on a level with Shefford, and perhaps three hundred yards distant. He gripped his rifle with a fatal assurance that he could kill one of them now. Still he waited. Curiosity consumed him, because every foot they advanced heightened their peril. Shefford wondered if Shadd would have chosen that course if the outlaw had not supposed the Navajo had chosen it first.

It was plain that one of the walking Piutes stooped now and then to examine the rock; he was looking for some faint sign of a horse-track.

Within two hundred yards of where Shefford lay hidden Shadd halted. His keen eye had caught the significance of the narrowing level before he had reached the end. He pointed and spoke. Shefford heard his voice. The others replied. They all looked up at the steep slope, down into the chasm right below them, and across into the cedars.

The Piute in the rear succeeded in turning his horse, went back, and began to circle up the slope. The others entered into an argument, in the course of which they became more closely grouped upon the narrow bench. Their mustangs were lean, wiry, wild, vicious; and Shefford calculated grimly upon what a stampede might mean in that position.

Then Shadd turned his mustang up the slope. Like a goat the animal climbed. Another Indian in the rear succeeded in pivoting his steed, and started back, apparently to circle round and up.

The others of the gang appeared uncertain. They yelled hoarsely at Shadd, who halted on the steep slant some twenty paces above them. He spoke and made motions which evidently meant that the climb was easy enough. It looked easy for him. His dark face flashed red in the rays of the sun.

At this critical moment Shefford decided to fire. He meant to kill Shadd, hoping that if the leader was gone the others would abandon the pursuit. The rifle wavered a little as he aimed—then grew still.

He fired. Shadd never flinched. But the fiery mustang, perhaps wounded, certainly terrified, plunged down with piercing, horrid scream. Shadd fell under him. Shrill yells rent the air. Like a thunderbolt, the sliding horse was upon men and animals below.

A heavy shock—wild snorts—upflinging heads and hoofs—a terrible trampling, thudding, shrieking mêlée—then a brown, twisting, tangled mass shot down the slant over the rim!

Shefford dazedly thought he saw men running. He did see plunging horses. One slipped—fell—rolled—and went into the chasm.

Then up from the depths came a crash—a long, sliding roar. In another instant there was a lighter crash—and a lighter, sliding roar.

Two horses, shaking, paralyzed with fear, were left upon the narrow level. Beyond them a couple of men were crawling along the stone. Up on the level stood two Indians, holding down frightened horses and staring at the fatal slope.

And Shefford lay there under the cedar in the ghastly grip of the moment, hardly comprehending that his ill-aimed shot had been a thunderbolt.

He did not think of shooting at the Piutes; they, however, recovering from their shock, evidently feared the ambush, for they swiftly drew up the slope and passed out of sight. The frightened horses below whistled and tramped along the lower level, finally vanishing. There was nothing left on the bare wall to prove to Shefford that it had been the scene of swift and tragic death.

He leaned from his covert and peered over the rim. Hundreds of feet below he saw dark growths of piñons. There was no sign of a pile of horses and men, and then he realized that he could not tell the number that had perished. The swift finale had been as stunning to him as if lightning had struck near him.

Suddenly it flashed over him what state of suspense and torture Fay and Jane must be in at that very moment. And leaping up, he ran out of the cedars to the slope behind and hurried down at risk of limb. The sun had set by this time. He hoped he could catch up with the party before dark.

He went straight down. The end of

the slope was a smooth, low wall. The Indian must have descended with the horses at some other point. The cañon, which was about fifty yards wide, headed under the great slope of Navajo Mountain. These smooth, rounded walls appeared to end at its low rim.

Shefford slid down upon a grassy bank, and finding the tracks of the horses, he followed them. They led along the wall. As soon as he had assured himself that Nas Ta Bega had gone down the cañon, he abandoned the tracks and pushed ahead swiftly. He heard the soft rush of running water.

In the center of the cañon wound heavy lines of bright-green foliage, bordering a rocky brook. The air was close, warm, and sweet with perfume of flowers. The walls were low and shelving, and soon lost that rounded appearance peculiar to the wind-worn slopes above. Shefford came to where the horses had plowed down a gravelly bank into the clear, swift water of the brook. The little pools of water were still muddy.

Shefford drank, finding the water cold and sweet, without the bitter bite of alkali. He crossed and pushed on, running on the grassy levels. Flowers were everywhere, but he did not notice them particularly. The cañon made many leisurely turns; its size, if it enlarged at all, was not perceptible to him yet. The rims above him were perhaps fifty feet high. Cottonwood-trees began to appear along the brook and blossoming buckbrush in the corners of wall.

He had traveled perhaps a mile when Nas Ta Bega, appearing to come out of the thicket, confronted him.

"Hello!" called Shefford. "Where are Fay—and the others?"

The Indian made a gesture that signified the rest of the party were beyond a little way. Shefford took Nas Ta Bega's arm, and as they walked, and he panted for breath, he told what had happened.

The Indian made one of his singular, speaking sweeps of the hand and scrutinized Shefford's face; but he received the news in silence. They turned a corner of wall, crossed a wide, shallow, boulder-strewn place in the brook, and mounted the bank to a thicket. Beyond this, from a clump of cottonwoods Lasiter strode out with a gun in each hand. He had been hiding.

"Shore I'm glad to see you," he said, and the eyes that piercingly fixed on Shefford were now as keen as formerly they had been mild.

"Gone! Lassiter—they're gone!" broke out Shefford. "Where's Fay—and Jane?"

Lassiter called. Presently the women came out of the thick brake. Fay bounded forward with her swift stride, while Jane followed with eager step and face. Then they all surrounded Shefford.

"It was Shadd—and his gang!" panted Shefford. "Eight in all. Three or four Piutes—the others outlaws. They lost track of us. Went below the place—where they shot at us. And they came up—on a bad slope."

Shefford described the slope and the deep chasm, and how Shadd led up to the point where he saw his mistake, and then how the catastrophe fell.

"I shot—and missed," repeated Shefford, with the sweat in beads on his pale face. "I missed Shadd. Maybe I hit the horse. He plunged—reared—fell back—a terrible fall—right upon that bunch of horses and men below. . . .

"In a horrible, wrestling, screaming tangle, they slid over the rim! I don't know how many. I saw some men running along. I saw three other horses plunging. One slipped and went over. I have no idea how many, but Shadd and some of his gang went to destruction."

"Shore that's fine!" said Lassiter. "But mebbe I won't get to use them guns after all."

"Hardly on that gang," laughed Shefford. "The two Piutes and what others escaped turned back. Maybe they'll meet a gang of rustlers—for, of course, the rustlers will track us, too—and come back to where Shadd lost his life."

"That's an awful place. Even the Piute got lost—couldn't follow Nas Ta Bega. It would take any pursuers some time to find how we got in here. I believe we need not fear further pursuit; certainly not to-night or to-morrow. Then we'll be far down the cañon."

When Shefford concluded his earnest remarks, the faces of Fay and Jane had lost the signs of suppressed dread.

"Nas Ta Bega, make camp here," said Shefford. "Water—wood—grass; why, this 's something like! Fay, how's your arm?"

"It hurts," she replied simply.

"Come with me down to the brook, and let me wash and bind it properly."

They went. She sat upon a stone, while he knelt beside her and untied his scarf from her arm. As the blood had hardened, it was necessary to slit her sleeve to the shoulder. Using his scarf, he washed the blood from the wound, which he found to be merely a cut, a groove, on the surface.

"That's nothing," Shefford said lightly. "It'll heal in a day. But there'll always be a scar. And when we—we get back to civilization—and you wear a pretty gown without sleeves—people will wonder what made this mark on your beautiful arm."

Fay looked at him with wonderful eyes.

"Do women wear gowns without sleeves?" she asked.

"They do."

"Have I a—beautiful arm?"

She stretched it out, white, blue-veined, the skin fine as satin, the lines graceful and flowing—a round, firm, strong arm.

"The most beautiful I ever saw," he replied.

But the pleasure his compliment gave her was not communicated to him. His last impression of that right arm had been of its strength—and his mind flashed with lightning swiftness to a picture that haunted him: Waggoner lying dead on the porch, with that powerfully driven knife in his breast. Shefford shuddered through all his being.

Would this phantom come often, to him like that?

Hurriedly he bound up her arm with the scarf. Without looking at her, he was conscious that she felt a subtle change in him.

The short twilight ended with the fugitives comfortable in a camp that for natural features could not have been improved upon. Darkness found Fay and Jane asleep on a soft, mossy bed, a blanket tucked around them, and their faces still and beautiful in the flickering camp-fire light.

Lassiter did not linger long awake. Nas Ta Bega, seeing Shefford's excessive fatigue, urged him to sleep. Shefford demurred, insisting that he share the night watch. But Nas Ta Bega,

by agreeing that Shefford might have the following night's duty, prevailed upon him.

Shefford seemed to shut his eyes upon darkness and to open them immediately to the light. The stream of blue sky above, the gold tints on the western rim, the rosy, brightening colors down in the cañon, were proofs of the sunrise. This morning Nas Ta Bega proceeded leisurely, and his manner was comforting. When all was in readiness for a start, he gave the mustang he had ridden to Shefford and walked, leading the pack-animal.

The mode of travel here was a selection of the best levels, the best places to cross the brook, the best banks to climb. It was a process of continual repetition. As the Indian picked out the course and the mustangs followed his lead, there was nothing for Shefford to do but take his choice between reflection that seemed predisposed toward gloom and an absorption in the beauty, color, wildness, and changing character of Nonnezoshe Boco.

Assuredly his experience in the desert did not count in it a trip down into a strange, beautiful, lost cañon such as this. It did not widen, though the walls grew higher. They began to lean and bulge, and the narrow strip of sky above resembled a flowing blue river. Huge caverns had been hollowed out by some work of nature—what he could not tell, though he was sure it could not have been wind.

And when the brook ran close under one of these overhanging places the running water made a singular, indescribable sound. A crack from a hoof on a stone rang like a hollow bell, and echoed from wall to wall. And the croak of a frog—the only living creature he had so far noted in the cañon—was a weird and melancholy thing.

Fay rode close to him, and his heart seemed to rejoice when she spoke, when she showed how she wanted to be near him. Yet, try as he might, he could not respond. His speech to her—what little there was—did not come spontaneously. And he suffered a remorse because he could not be honestly natural to her. Then he would drive away the encroaching gloom—trusting that a little time would dispel it.

"We are deeper down than Surprise Valley," said Fay.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"Here are the pink and yellow sagolilies. You remember we went once to find the white ones? I have found white lilies in Surprise Valley, but never any pink or yellow."

Shefford had seen flowers all along the green banks, but he had not marked the lilies. Here he dismounted and gathered several. They were larger than the white ones of higher altitudes, of the same exquisite beauty and fragility, of such rare pink and yellow hues as he had never seen. He gave the flowers to Fay.

"They bloom only where it's always summer," she said.

That expressed their nature. They were the orchids of the summer cañons. They stood up everywhere, starlike, out of the green. It was impossible to prevent the mustangs from treading them under hoof.

And as the cañon deepened, and many little springs added their tiny volume to the brook, every grassy bench was dotted with lilies, like a green sky star-spangled. And this increasing luxuriance manifested itself in the banks of purple moss and clumps of lavender daisies and great clusters of yellow violets. The brook was lined with blossoming buck-brush; the rocky corners showed the crimson and magenta of cactus; ledges were green with shining moss that sparkled with little white flowers. The hum of bees filled the air.

But by and by this green and colorful and verdant beauty, the almost level floor of the cañon, the banks of soft earth, the thickets and the clumps of cottonwoods, the shelving caverns and the bulging walls—these features gradually were lost. Nonnezoshe Boco began to deepen in bare red and white stone steps. The walls sheered away from one another, breaking into sections and ledges and rising higher and higher, and there began to be manifested a dark and solemn concordance with the Nature that had created this rent in the earth.

There was a stretch of miles where steep steps in hard, red rock alternated with long levels of round boulders. Here, one by one, the mustangs went lame. And the fugitives, dismounting to spare the faithful beasts, slipped and stumbled over these loose and treacherous stones. Fay was the only one who did not show dis-

treass. She was glad to be on foot again, and the rolling boulders were as stable as solid rock for her.

The hours passed; the toil increased; the progress diminished; one of the mustangs failed entirely and was left; and all the while the dimensions of Nonnezoshe Boco magnified and its character changed. It became a thousand-foot walled cañon, leaning, broken, threatening, with great, yellow slides blocking passage, with huge sections split off from the main wall, with immense dark and gloomy caverns.

Strangely, it had no intersecting cañons. It jealously guarded its secret. Its unusual formations of cavern and pillar and half-arch led the mind to expect any monstrous stone-shape left by an avalanche or cataclysm.

Down and down the fugitives toiled. And now the stream-bed was bare of boulders and the banks of earth. The floods that had rolled down that cañon had here borne away every loose thing. All the floor was bare red-and-white stone, polished, glistening, slippery, affording treacherous foothold. And the time came when Nas Ta Bega abandoned the stream-bed to take to the rock-strewn and cactus-covered ledges above.

Jane gave out, and had to be assisted upon the weary mustang. Fay was persuaded to mount Nack-yal again. Lassiter plodded along. The Indian bent tired steps far in advance. And Shefford traveled on after him, footsore and hot.

The cañon widened ahead in a great, ragged, iron-hued amphitheater, and from there seemed to turn abruptly at right angles. Sunset rimmed the walls. Shefford wondered dully when the Indian would halt to camp. And he dragged himself onward with eyes down on the rough ground.

When he raised them again the Indian stood on a point of slope with folded arms, gazing down where the cañon veered. Something in Nas Ta Bega's pose quickened Shefford's pulse and then his steps. He reached the Indian, and the point where he, too, could see beyond that vast, jutting wall that had obstructed his view.

A mile beyond all was bright with the colors of sunset. Spanning the cañon in the graceful shape and beautiful hues of a rainbow was a magnificent stone bridge.

"Nonnezoshe!" exclaimed the Navajo, with a deep and sonorous roll in his voice.

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW.

THE rainbow bridge was the one great natural phenomenon, the one grand spectacle, which Shefford had ever seen that did not at first give vague disappointment, a confounding of reality, a disenchantment of contrast with what the mind had conceived.

But this thing was glorious. It silenced him, yet did not awe nor stun. His body and brain, weary and dull from the toil of travel, received a singular and revivifying freshness. He had a strange, mystic perception of this rosy-hued, stupendous arch of stone, as if in a former life it had been a goal he could not reach.

This wonder of Nature, though all-satisfying, all-fulfilling to his artist's soul, could not be a resting-place for him, a destination where something awaited him, a height he must scale to find peace, the end of his strife. But it seemed all these. He could not understand his perception or his emotion.

Still, here at last, apparently, was the rainbow of his boyish dreams and of his manhood—a rainbow magnified even beyond those dreams, no longer transparent and ethereal, but solidified, a thing of ages, sweeping up majestically from the red walls, its iris-hued arch against the blue sky.

Nas Ta Bega led on down the ledge. Shefford plodded thoughtfully after him. The others followed. A jutting corner of wall again hid the cañon. The Indian was working round to circle the huge amphitheater. It was slow, irritating, strenuous toil, for the way was on a steep slant, rough and loose and dragging. The rocks were as hard and jagged as lava. And the cactus further hindered progress. When at last the long half-circle had been accomplished, the golden and rosy lights had faded.

Again the cañon opened to view. All the walls were pale and steely, and the stone bridge loomed dark. Nas Ta Bega said camp would be made at the bridge, which was now close.

Just before they reached it, the Navajo

halted with one of his singular actions. Then he stood motionless. Shefford realized that Nas Ta Bega was saying his prayer to this great stone god.

Presently the Indian motioned for Shefford to lead the others and the horses on under the bridge. Shefford did so, and upon turning was amazed to see the Indian climbing the steep and difficult slope on the other side. All the party watched him until he disappeared behind the huge base of cliff that supported the arch.

Shefford selected a level place for camp, some few rods away, and here, with Lassiter, unsaddled and unpacked the lame, drooping mustangs. When this was done twilight had fallen.

Nas Ta Bega appeared coming down the steep slope on this side of the bridge. Then Shefford divined why the Navajo had made that arduous climb. He would not go under the bridge. Nonnezoshe was a Navajo god. And Nas Ta Bega, though educated as a white man, was true to the superstition of his ancestors.

Nas Ta Bega turned the mustangs loose to fare for what scant grass grew on bench and slope. Firewood was even harder to find than grass. When the camp duties had been performed and the simple meal eaten, gloom was gathering in the cañon and the stars had begun to blink in the pale strip of blue above the lofty walls. The place was oppressive; the fugitives mostly kept silence.

Shefford spread a bed of blankets for the women, and Jane at once lay wearily down. Fay stood beside the flickering fire; Shefford felt her watching him. He was conscious of a desire to get away from her haunting gaze. To the gentle "Good night" he bade her she made no response.

Shefford moved away into a strange, dark shadow cast by the bridge against the pale starlight. It was a weird, black belt, where he imagined he was invisible, but out of which he could see. There was a slab of rock near the foot of the bridge; here Shefford composed himself to watch, to feel, to think the unknown thing that seemed to be inevitably coming to him.

A slight stiffening of his neck made him aware that he had been continually looking up at the looming arch. And he

found that insensibly it had changed and grown. It had never seemed the same any two moments, but that was not what he meant. Near at hand, it was too vast a thing for immediate comprehension. He wanted to ponder on what had formed it—to reflect upon its meaning as to age and force of nature; yet all he could do at each moment was to see.

White stars hung along the dark, curved line. The rim of the arch seemed to shine. The moon must be up there somewhere. The far side of the cañon was now a blank, black wall. Over its towering rim showed a pale glow. It brightened. The shades in the cañon lightened; then a white disk of moon peeped over the dark line. The bridge turned to silver, and the gloomy, shadowy belt it had cast blanched and vanished.

Shefford became aware of the presence of Nas Ta Bega. Dark, silent, statuesque, with inscrutable eyes uplifted, with all that was spiritual of the Indian suggested by a somber and tranquil knowledge of his place there, he represented the same to Shefford as a solitary figure of human life brought out the greatness of a great picture.

Nonnezoshe Boco needed life, wild life, life of its millions of years—and here stood the dark and silent Indian.

There was a surge in Shefford's heart, and in his mind a perception of a moment of incalculable change to his soul. And at that moment Fay Larkin stole like a phantom to his side, and stood there with her uncovered head shining and her white face lovely in the moonlight.

"May I stay with you—a little?" she asked wistfully. "I can't sleep."

"Surely you may," he replied. "Does your arm hurt too badly, or are you too tired to sleep?"

"No—it's this place. I—I—can't tell you how I feel."

But the feeling was there in her eyes for Shefford to read. Had he too great an emotion—did he read too much—did he add from his soul? For him the wild, starry, haunted eyes mirrored all that he had seen and felt under Nonnezoshe. And for herself they shone eloquently of courage and love.

"I need to talk—and I don't know how," she said.

He was silent, but he took her hands and drew her closer.

"Why are you so—so different?" she asked bravely.

"Different?" he echoed.

"Yes. You are kind; you speak the same to me as you used to. But since we started you've been different somehow."

"Fay, think how hard and dangerous the trip's been! I've been worried—and sick with dread—with— Oh, you can't imagine the strain I'm under! How could I be my old self?"

"It isn't worry I mean."

He was too miserable to try to find out what she did mean; besides, he believed, if he let himself think about it, he would know what troubled her.

"I—I am almost happy," she said softly.

"Fay, aren't you at all afraid?"

"No. You'll take care of me. Do—do you love me—like you did before?"

"Why, child, of course—I love you!" he replied brokenly, and he drew her closer.

He had never embraced her, never kissed her. But there was a whiteness about her then—a wraith—a something from her soul, and he could only gaze at her.

"I love you," she whispered. "I thought I knew it that—that night. But I'm only finding it out now. And somehow I had to tell you here."

"Fay, I haven't said much to you," he said hurriedly, huskily. "I haven't had a chance. I love you. I—I ask you—will you be my wife?"

"Of course," she said simply; but the white, moon-blanced face colored with a dark and leaping blush.

"We'll be married as soon as we get out of the desert," he went on. "And we'll forget—all—all that's happened. You're so young! You'll forget."

"I'd forgotten already till this difference came in you. And pretty soon—when I can say something more to you—I'll forget all except Surprise Valley—and my evenings in the starlight with you."

"Say it then—quick!"

She was leaning against him, holding his hands in her strong clasp, soulful, tender, almost passionate.

"You couldn't help it! I'm to blame! I remember what I said!"

"What?" he queried in amaze.

"I made you kill him."

"Kill—whom?" cried Shefford.

"Waggoner. I'm to blame. That must be what's made you different. And oh, I've wanted you to know it's all my fault! But I wouldn't be sorry if you weren't. I'm glad he's dead."

"You—think—I—"

Shefford's gasping whisper failed in the shock of the revelation that Fay believed he had killed Waggoner. Then with the inference came the staggering truth—her guiltlessness; and a paralyzing joy held him stricken.

A powerful hand fell upon Shefford's shoulder, startling him. Nas Ta Bega stood there, looking down upon him and Fay. Never had the Indian seemed so dark, so inscrutable of face. But in his magnificent bearing, in the spirit that Shefford sensed in him, there was nobility and power and a strange pride.

The Indian kept one hand on Shefford's shoulder, and with the other he struck himself on the breast. The action was that of an Indian, impressive and stern, significant of an Indian's prowess.

"You!" breathed Shefford very low.

"Oh, what does he mean?" cried Fay.

Shefford held her with shaking hands, trying to speak, to fight a way out of these stultifying emotions.

"Nas Ta Bega—you heard—she thinks—I killed Waggoner!"

All about the Navajo then was dark and solemn disproof of her belief. He did not need to speak. His repetition of that savage, almost boastful blow on his breast added only to the dignity and not to the denial of a warrior.

"Fay, he means he killed Waggoner," said Shefford. "He must have, for I did not!"

"Ah!" murmured Fay, and she leaned to him with passionate, quivering gladness.

It was the woman—the human—the soul born in her that came uppermost then; now, when there was no direct call to the wild and elemental in her nature, she showed a heart above revenge—the instinct of a saving right, of truth as Shefford knew them. He took her into his arms. Never had he loved her so well.

"Nas Ta Bega, you killed the rustler," declared Shefford with a voice that had gained strength.

No silent Indian suggestion of a deed would suffice in that moment. Shefford needed to hear the Navajo speak—to have Fay hear him speak.

"Nas Ta Bega, I know—I understand. But tell her. Speak so she will know. Tell it as a white man would!"

"I heard her cry out," replied the Indian in his slow English. "I waited. When he came I killed him."

A poignant "Why?" was wrenched from Shefford. Nas Ta Bega stood silent.

"*Bi-nai!*"

And when that sonorous Indian word, "Brother!" rolled in dignity from his lips, he silently stalked away into the gloom. That was his answer to the white man.

Shefford bent over Fay, and as the strain on him broke he held her closer and closer, and his tears streamed down, and his voice broke in exclamations of tenderness and thanksgiving. It did not matter what she had thought, but she must never know what he had thought.

He clasped her as something precious he had lost and regained. He was shaken with a passion of remorse.

How could he have believed Fay Lar-kin guilty of murder? Women less wild and less justified than she had been driven to such a deed; yet how could he have believed it of her, when for two days he had been with her, had seen her face and deep into her eyes?

There was a mystery in his very blindness. He cast the whole thought from him forever. There was no shadow between Fay and him. He had found her. He had saved her. She was free. She was innocent.

And suddenly, as he seemed delivered from contending tumults within, he became aware that it was no unresponsive creature he had folded to his breast.

He became suddenly alive to the warm, throbbing contact of her bosom—to her strong arms clinging round his neck—to her closed eyes—to the rapt whiteness of her face. And he bent to cold lips that seemed to receive his first kisses as new and strange, but tremulously changed at last to meet his own, and then to burn with sweet and thrilling fire.

"My darling, my dream's come true!" he whispered. "You are my treasure! I found you at the foot of a rainbow!"

"What if it is a stone rainbow—if all is not as I had dreamed? I followed a gleam. And it's led me to love and faith!"

Hours afterward Shefford walked alone to and fro under the bridge. His trouble had given place to serenity. But this night of nights he must live out wide-eyed to its end.

The moon had long since crossed the streak of star-fired blue above and the cañon was black in shadow. At times a current of wind, with all the strangeness of that strange country in its hollow moan, rushed through the great stone arch. At other times there was silence such as Shefford imagined dwelt deep under this rocky world. At still other times an owl hooted, and the sound was nameless. But it had a mocking echo that never ended—an echo of night, silence, gloom, melancholy, death, age, eternity!

The Indian lay asleep with his dark face upturned, and the other sleepers lay calm and white in the starlight.

Shefford saw in them the meaning of life and the past—the illimitable train of faces that had shone under the stars. There was a spirit in the cañon, and whether or not it was what the Navajo embodied in the great Nonnezoshe, or whether it was the life of the present, or the death of the ages, or the nature so magnificently manifested in those silent, dreaming, waiting walls—the truth for Shefford was that this spirit was God.

Life was eternal. Man's immortality lay in himself. Love of a woman was hope—happiness. Brotherhood—that mystic and grand "*Bi-nai*" of the Navajo—that was religion.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GRAND CAÑON OF THE COLORADO.

THE night passed; the gloom turned gray; the dawn stole, cool and pale, into the cañon. When Nas Ta Bega drove the mustangs into camp, the lofty ramparts of the walls were rimmed with gold, and the dark arch of Nonnezoshe began to lose its steely gray.

The women had rested well, and were in better condition to travel. Jane was cheerful; Fay, radiant one moment and

in a dream the next. She was beginning to live in that wonderful future. They talked more than usual at breakfast, and Lassiter made droll remarks. Shefford, with his great and haunting trouble ended forever, with now only danger to face ahead, was a different man, but thoughtful and quiet.

This morning the Indian leisurely made preparations for the start. For all the concern he showed, he might have known every foot of the cañon below Nonnezoshe. But for Shefford, with the dawn had returned anxiety, a restless feeling of the need of hurry. What obstacles, what impassable gorges, might lie between this bridge and the river! The Indian's inscrutable serenity and Fay's trust, her radiance, the exquisite glow upon her face, sustained Shefford, and gave him patience to endure and conceal his dread.

At length the flight was resumed, with Nas Ta Bega leading on foot and Shefford walking in the rear. A quarter of a mile below camp the Indian led down a declivity into the bottom of the narrow gorge where the stream ran. He did not gaze backward for a last glance at Nonnezoshe; nor did Jane or Lassiter. Fay, however, checked Nack-yal at the rim of the descent, and turned to look behind. Shefford contrasted her tremulous smile, her half happy good-by to this place, with the white stillness of her face when she had bade farewell to Surprise Valley. Then she rode Nack-yal down into the gorge.

Shefford knew that this would be his last look at the Rainbow Bridge. As he gazed, the tip of the great arch lost its cold, dark, stone-color and began to shine. The sun had just arisen high enough over some low break in the wall to reach the bridge. Shefford watched. Slowly, in wondrous transformation, the gold and blue and rose and pink and purple blended their hues, softly, mistily, cloudily, until once again the arch was a rainbow.

Ages before life had evolved upon the earth it had spread its grand arch from wall to wall, black and mystic at night, transparent and rosy in the sunrise, at sunset a flaming curve limned against the heavens. When the race of man had passed it would, perhaps, stand there still.

It was not for many eyes to see. Only

by toil, sweat, endurance, blood could any man ever look at Nonnezoshe. So it would always be alone, grand, silent, beautiful, unintelligible.

Shefford bade Nonnezoshe a mute, reverent farewell. Then, plunging down the weathered slope of the gorge to the stream below, he hurried forward to join the others. They had progressed much farther than he imagined they would have; this was owing to the fact that the floor of the gorge afforded easy travel. It was gravel or rock-bottom, tortuous but open, with infrequent and shallow, downward steps.

The stream did not now rush and boil along and tumble over rock-encumbered ledges. In corners the water collected in round, green, eddying pools. There were patches of grass and willows and mounds of moss.

Shefford's surprise equaled his relief, for he believed that the violent descent of Nonnezoshe Boco had been passed. Any turn now, he imagined, might bring the party out upon the river. When he caught up with them he imparted this conviction, which was received with cheer. The hopes of all, except the Indian's, seemed mounting; and if he ever hoped or despaired, it was never manifest.

Shefford's anticipation, however, was not soon realized. The fugitives traveled miles farther down Nonnezoshe Boco, and the only changes were that the walls of the lower gorge heightened and merged into those above, and that these upper ones towered ever loftier. Shefford had to throw his head straight back to look up at the rims, and the narrow strip of sky was now indeed a flowing stream of blue.

Difficult steps were met, too; yet nothing compared to those of the upper cañon. Shefford calculated that this day's travel had advanced several hours; and more than ever now, he was anticipating the mouth of Nonnezoshe Boco.

Still another hour went by. And then came striking changes. The cañon narrowed till the walls were scarcely twenty paces apart; the color of stone grew dark red above and black down low; the light of day became shadowed, and the floor was a level, gravelly, winding lane, with the stream meandering slowly and silently.

Suddenly the Indian halted and turned his ear down the cañon-lane. He had heard something. The others grouped round him, but did not hear a sound except the soft flow of water and the heave of the mustangs. Then the Indian went on.

Presently he halted again. And again he listened. This time he threw up his head, and upon his dark face shone a light which might have been pride.

"*Tse ko-n-tsa-igi*," he said.

The others could not understand, but they were impressed.

"Shore he means somethin' big," drawled Lassiter.

"Oh, what did he say?" queried Fay in eagerness.

"Nas Ta Bega, tell us," said Shefford.

"We are full of hope."

"Grand Cañon," replied the Indian.

"How do you know?" asked Shefford.

"I hear the roar of the river."

But Shefford, listen as he might, could not hear it. They traveled on, winding down the wonderful lane. Every once in a while Shefford lagged behind, let the others pass out of hearing, and then he listened.

At last he was rewarded. Low and deep, dull and strange, with some quality to incite dread, came a roar. Thereafter at intervals, usually at turns in the cañon, and when a faint stir of warm air fanned his cheeks, he heard the sound, growing clearer and louder.

He rounded an abrupt corner, to have the roar suddenly fill his ears, to see the lane extend straight to a ragged vent, and beyond that at some distance a dark, ragged, bulging wall, like iron. As he hurried forward he was surprised to find that the noise did not increase. Here it kept a strange uniformity of tone and volume.

The others of the party passed out of the mouth of Nonnezoshe Boco in advance of Shefford; and when he reached it they were grouped upon a bank of sand. A dark-red cañon yawned before them, and through it slid the strangest river Shefford had ever seen. At first glance he imagined the strangeness consisted of the dark-red color of the water, but at the second he was not so sure.

All the others, except Nas Ta Bega, eyed the river blankly, as if they did not

know what to think. The roar came from a huge, bulging wall down-stream. Up the cañon half a mile, at another turn, there was a leaping rapid of dirty red-white waves; and the sound of this probably was drowned in the unseen but nearer rapid.

"This is the Grand Cañon of the Colorado," said Shefford. "We've come out at the mouth of Nonnezoshe Boco. And now to wait for Joe Lake!"

They made camp on a dry, level sandbar, under a shelving wall. Nas Ta Bega collected a pile of driftwood to be used for fire, and then he took the mustangs back up the side-cañon to find grass for them. Lassiter appeared unusually quiet, and soon passed from weary rest on the sand to deep slumber.

Fay and Jane succumbed to an exhaustion that manifested itself the moment relaxation set in, and they, too, fell asleep. Shefford patrolled the long strip of sand under the wall, and watched up the river for Joe Lake. The Indian returned, and went along the river, climbed over the jutting, sharp slopes that reached into the water, and passed out of sight, upstream, toward the rapid.

Shefford had a sense that the river and the cañon were too magnificent to be compared with others. Still, all his emotions and sensations had been so wrought upon that he seemed not to have any left by which he might judge of what constituted the difference. He would wait. He had a grim conviction that, before he was safely out of this earth-riven crack, he would know.

One thing, however, struck him; it was that up the cañon, high over the lower walls, hazy and blue, stood other walls, and beyond and above them, dim in purple distance, upreared still other walls. The haze and the blue and the purple meant great distance; likewise the height seemed incomparable.

The red river attracted him most. Since this was the medium by which he must escape with his party, it was natural that it absorbed him to the neglect of the gigantic cliffs. And the more he watched the river, studied it, listened to it, imagined its nature, its power, its relentlessness, the more he dreaded it.

As the hours of the afternoon wore away, and he strolled along and rested on the banks, his first impressions, and

what he realized might be his truest ones, were gradually lost. He could not bring them back. The river was changing, deceitful. It worked upon his mind. The low, hollow roar filled his ears and seemed to mock him.

Then he endeavored to stop thinking about it—to confine his attention to the gap up-stream, where sooner or later he prayed that Joe Lake and the boat would appear. But, though he controlled his gaze, he could not control his thought, and his strange, impondering dread of the river augmented.

The afternoon waned. Nas Ta Bega came back to camp, and said that any likelihood of Joe's arrival was past for that day. Shefford could not get over an impression of strangeness—of the impossibility of the reality presented to his naked eyes. These lonely fugitives in the huge-walled cañon, waiting for a boatman to come down that river! Strange and wild—those were the words which, inadequately at best, suited this country and the situations it produced.

After supper he and Fay walked along the bars of smooth, red sand. There were a few moments when the distant peaks and domes and turrets were glorified in changing sunset hues. But the beauty was fleeting.

Fay still showed lassitude. She was quiet, yet cheerful; and the sweetness of her smile, her absolute trust in him, stirred and strengthened anew his spirit. Yet he suffered torture when he thought of trusting Fay's life, her soul, and her beauty to this strange, red river.

Night brought him relief. He could not see the river; only the low roar made its presence known out there in the shadows. And there being no need to stay awake, he dropped into heavy slumber.

He was roused by hands dragging at him. Nas Ta Bega bent over him. It was broad daylight. The yellow wall, high above, was glistening. A fire was crackling, and pleasant odors were wafted to him. Fay and Jane and Lassiter sat around the tarpaulin at breakfast.

After the meal suspense and strain were manifested in all the fugitives—even the imperturbable Indian being more than usually watchful. His eyes scarcely ever left the black gap where the river slid round the turn above.

Soon, as on the preceding day, he dis-

appeared up the ragged, iron-bound shore. There was scarcely an attempt at conversation. A controlling thought bound that group into silence—if Joe Lake was ever going to come, he would come to-day.

A hundred times Shefford asked himself if it were possible, and his answer seemed to be in the low, sullen, muffled roar of the river. And as the morning wore on toward noon his dread deepened, until all chance appeared hopeless. Already he had begun to have vague and unformed and disquieting ideas of the only avenue of escape left—to return up Nonnezoshe Boco—and that would be to enter a trap.

Suddenly a piercing cry pealed down the cañon. It was followed by echoes, weird and strange, that clapped from wall to wall in mocking concatenation.

Nas Ta Bega appeared high on the ragged slope. The cry had been the Indian's. He swept an arm out—pointing up-stream—and stood like a statue on the iron rocks.

Shefford's keen gaze sighted a moving something in the bend of the river. It was long, low, dark, and flat, with a lighter object upright in the middle. A boat and a man!

"Joe! It's Joe!" yelled Shefford madly. "There! Look!"

Jane and Fay were on their knees in the sand, clasping each other, pale faces toward that bend in the river.

Shefford ran up the shore toward the Indian. He climbed the jutting slant of rock. The boat was now full in the turn—it moved faster—it was nearing the smooth incline above the rapid.

There! It glided down—heaved darkly up—settled back—and disappeared in the frothy, muddy roughness of water. Shefford held his breath and watched. A dark, bobbing object showed—vanished—showed again to enlarge—to take the shape of a big flat-boat—and then it rode the swift, choppy current out of the lower end of the rapid.

Nas Ta Bega began to make violent motions, and Shefford, taking his cue, frantically waved his red scarf. There was a five-mile-an-hour current right before them, and Joe must needs see them, so that he might sheer the huge and clumsy craft into the shore before it drifted too far down.

Presently Joe did see them. He raised aloft both arms and bellowed down the cañon. The echoes boomed from wall to wall, every one stronger with the deep, hoarse triumph in his voice, till they passed on, growing weaker, to die away in the roar of the river below.

Then Joe bent to a long oar that appeared to be fastened to the stern of the boat, and the craft drifted out of the swifter current toward the shore. It reached a point opposite to where Shefford and the Indian waited, and though Joe made prodigious efforts, it slid on. Still, it also drifted shoreward, and half-way down to the mouth of Nonnezoshe Boco, Joe threw the end of a rope to the Indian.

"Ho! Ho!" yelled the cowboy, again setting into motion the fiendish echoes.

He was naked to the waist; he had lost flesh; he was haggard, worn, dirty, wet. While he pulled on a shirt, Nas Ta Bega made the rope fast to a snag of a log of driftwood embedded in the sand, and the boat swung to shore.

It was perhaps thirty feet long by half as many wide, crudely built of rough-hewn boards. The steering-gear was a long pole with a plank nailed to the end.

The craft was empty save for another pole and plank, Joe's coat, and a broken-handled shovel. There were water and sand on the flooring.

Joe stepped ashore. He was gripped first by Shefford and then by the Indian. He was an unkempt and gaunt giant—yet how steadfast and reliable, how grimly strong to inspire hope!

"Reckon most of me's here," he said in reply to greetings. "I've had water a plenty. You bet! I've had *water*!"

He rolled out a grim laugh.

"But no grub for three days—forgot to fetch some!"

How practical he was! He told Fay she looked good for sore eyes, but he needed a biscuit most of all. There was just a second of singular hesitation when he faced Lassiter, and then the big, strong hand of the young rustler went out to meet the old gunman. While they fed him, and he ate like a starved man, Shefford told him their adventures, starting with the flight from the village; and concluding, Shefford, without any explanation, told that Nas Ta Bega had killed Waggoner.

"Reckon I had that figured," replied Joe. "First off, I didn't think so."

"So Shadd went over the cliff. That's good riddance. It beats me, though. Never knew that Piute's like with a horse. And he had some grand horses in his outfit. Pity about them."

Later, when Joe had a moment alone with Shefford, he explained that during his ride to Kayenta he had realized Fay's innocence and who had been responsible for the tragedy. He took Withers, the trader, into his confidence, and they planned a story, which Withers was to carry to Stonebridge, that would exculpate Fay and Shefford of anything more serious than flight. If Shefford got Fay safely out of the country at once, that would end the matter for all concerned.

"Reckon I'm a ferry-boatman, too—a *fairy* boatman. Haw! Haw!" he added. "And we're going through."

"Now I want you to help me rig this tarpaulin up over the bow of the boat. If we can fix it up strong, it'll keep the waves from curling over. They filled her four times for me."

They folded the tarpaulin thrice, and with stout pieces of split plank and horse-shoe nails from Shefford's saddle-bags and pieces of rope, they rigged up a screen round bow and front corners.

Nas Ta Bega put the saddles in the boat. The mustangs were now far up Nonnezoshe Boco, along which they would work their way back to green and luxuriant cañons. The Indian said they would soon become wild, and would never be found. Shefford regretted Nack-yal, but was glad the faithful little mustang would be free in one of those beautiful cañons.

"Reckon we'd better be off!" called Joe. "All aboard!"

He placed Fay and Jane in a corner of the bow, where they would be spared sight of the rapids. Shefford loosed the rope and sprang aboard.

"Pard," said Joe, "it's one son-of-a-gun of a river! And now, with the snow melting up in the mountains, it's twenty feet above normal and rising fast."

"But that's well for us; it covers the stones in the rapids. If it hadn't been in flood, little Joey would be an angel now!"

The boat cleared the sand, lazily wheeled in the eddying water, and sud-

denly seemed caught by some powerful gliding force. When it swept out beyond the jutting wall Shefford saw a quarter of a mile of sliding water that appeared to end abruptly. Beyond lengthened out the gigantic gap between the black and frowning cliffs.

"Wow!" ejaculated Joe. "Drops out of sight there. But that one ain't much. I can tell by the roar. When you see my hair stand up straight—then watch out!"

"Lassiter, you look after the women. Shefford, you stand ready to bail out with the shovel, for we'll sure ship water. Nas Ta Bega, you help here with the oar."

The roar became a heavy, continuous rumble; the current quickened; little streaks and ridges seemed to race along the boat; strange gurglings rose from under the bow. Shefford stood on tiptoe to see the break in the river below.

Swiftly it came into sight—a wonderful, long, smooth, red slant of water, a swelling mound, a huge, back-curling wave—another and another—a sea of frothy, uplifting crests, leaping and tumbling and diminishing down to the narrowing apex of the rapid. It was a frightful sight, yet it thrilled Shefford.

Joe worked the steering-oar back and forth, and headed the boat straight for the middle of the incline. The boat reached the round rim, gracefully dipped with a heavy sop, and went shooting down.

The wind blew wet in Shefford's face. He stood erect, thrilling, fascinated, frightened. Then he seemed to feel himself lifted; the curling wave leaped at the boat; there was a shock that laid him flat; and when he rose to his knees, all about him was roar and spray and leaping, muddy waves.

Shock after shock jarred the boat. Splashes of water stung his face. And then the jar and the motion, the confusion and roar, gradually lessened, until presently Shefford rose to see smooth water ahead and the long, trembling rapid behind.

"Get busy, bailer!" yelled Joe. "Pretty soon you'll be glad you have to bail—so you *can't* see!"

There were several inches of water in the bottom of the boat. Shefford learned for the first time the expediency of a shovel in the art of bailing.

"That tarpaulin worked powerful good," went on Joe. "And it saves the women. Now if it just don't bust on a big wave! That one back there was little."

When Shefford had scooped out all the water, he went forward to see how Fay and Jane and Lassiter had fared. The women were pale, but composed. They had covered their heads.

"But the dreadful roar!" exclaimed Fay.

Lassiter looked shaken for once.

"Shore I'd rather taken a chance meetin' them rustlers on the way out," he said.

Shefford spoke with an encouraging assurance which he did not himself feel. Almost at the moment he marked a silence that had fallen into the cañon; then it broke to a low, dull, strange roar.

"Aha! Hear that?"

Joe shook his shaggy head.

"Reckon we're in Cataract Cañon. We'll be standing on end from now on. Hang on to her, boys!"

Danger of this unusual kind had brought out a peculiar levity in the cowboy—a kind of wild, gay excitement. His eyes rolled as he watched the river ahead, and he puffed out his cheek with his tongue.

The rugged, overhanging walls of the cañon grew sinister in Shefford's sight. They were jaws. And the river—that made him shudder to look down into it. The little, whirling pits were eyes peering into his. They raced on with the boat, disappeared, and came again, always with the little, hollow gurgles.

The craft drifted swiftly, and the roar increased. Another rapid seemed to move up into view. It came at a bend in the cañon. When the breeze struck Shefford's cheeks, he did not this time experience exhilaration.

The current accelerated its sliding motion and bore the flat-boat straight for the middle of the curve. Shefford saw the bend, a long, dark, narrow, gloomy cañon and a stretch of contending waters; then, crouching low, he waited for the dip, the race, the shock. They came—the last stopping the boat—throwing it aloft—letting it drop—and crests of angry waves curled over the side.

Shefford, kneeling, felt the water slap around him. In his ears was a deafen-

ing roar. There were endless moments of strife and hell and flying darkness of spray all about him, and under him the rocking boat. When they lessened—ceased in violence—he stood ankle-deep in water; then madly he began to bail.

Another roar deadened his ears, but he did not look up from his toil. And when he had to get down to avoid the pitch, he closed his eyes. That rapid passed; and with more water to bail, he resumed his share in the manning of the crude craft. It was more than a share—it was a tremendous responsibility to which he bent with all his might.

He heard Joe yell — and again — and again. He heard the increasing roars, one after another, till they seemed one continuous bellow. He felt the shock, the pitch, the beating waves, and then the lessening power of sound and current. That set him to his task.

Always in these long intervals of toil he seemed to see without looking up the growing proportions of the cañon. And the river had become a living, terrible thing. The intervals of his tireless effort when he scooped the water overboard were fleeting, and the rides through rapid after rapid were endless periods of waiting terror. His spirit and his hope were overwhelmed by the rush and roar and fury.

Then as he worked there came a change—a rest to deafened ears—a stretch of river that seemed quiet after chaos—and here for the first time he bailed the boat clear of water.

Jane and Fay were huddled in a corner, with the flapping tarpaulin now half fallen over them. They were wet and muddy. Lassiter crouched like a man dazed by a bad dream; his white hair hung, stained and bedraggled, over his face. The Indian and the cowboy, grim, hard, worn, stood silent at the oar.

The afternoon was far advanced, and the sun had already descended below the western ramparts. A cool breeze blew up the cañon, laden with a sound that was the same, yet not the same, as those low, dull roars which Shefford dreaded more and more.

Joe Lake turned his ear to the breeze. A stronger puff brought a heavy, quivering rumble. This time he did not vent his gay and wild defiance to the river. He bent lower—listened.

Then, as the rumble became a strange, deep, reverberating roll, as if the monstrous river were rolling huge stones down a subterranean cañon, Shefford saw with dilating eyes that Joe's hair was rising stiff upon his head.

"Hear that?" said Joe, turning an ashen face to Shefford. "We'll drop off the earth now. Hang on to the girl, so if we go you can go together. And, pard, if you've got a God—*pray!*"

Nas Ta Bega faced the bend whence that rumble came. He was the same dark, inscrutable, impassive Indian as of old. What was death to him?

Shefford felt the strong, rushing love of life surge in him. It was not for himself, he thought, but for Fay and the happiness she merited. He went to her, patted the covered head, and tried, with words choking in his throat, to give hope. And he leaned with hands gripping the gunwale, with eyes wide open, ready for the unknown.

The river made a quick turn. From round the bend rumbled a terrible uproar. The current racing that way was divided or uncertain; it gave strange motion to the boat. Joe and Nas Ta Bega shoved desperately upon the oar, all to no purpose; the currents had their will. The bow of the boat took the place of the stern. Then, swift at the head of a curved incline, it shot beyond the bulging wall.

And Shefford saw an awful place before them. The cañon had narrowed to half its width and turned almost at right angles. The huge clamor of appalling sound came from under the cliff where the swollen river had to pass and where there was not space. The rapid rushed in gigantic swells right upon the wall, boomed against it, climbed and spread and fell away, to recede and gather new impetus to leap madly on down the cañon.

Shefford went to his knees, clasped Fay, and Jane, too. But facing this appalling thing, he had to look. Courage and despair came to him at the last. This must be the end. With long, buoyant swing the boat sailed down, shot over the first waves, was caught and lifted upon the great swell and impelled straight toward the cliff.

Huge whirlpools raced alongside, and from them came a horrible, engulfing roar. Monstrous bulges rose on the other

side. All the stupendous power of that mighty river of downward-rushing silt swung the boat aloft, up and up, as the swell climbed the wall.

With transfixed eyes and harrowed soul, Shefford watched the wet, black wall. It loomed down upon him. The stern of the boat went high. Then, when the crash that meant doom seemed imminent, the swell spread and fell back from the wall, and the boat never struck at all. By some miraculous chance it had been favored with a strange and momentary receding of the huge, spent swell.

Then it slid back, was caught and whirled by the current into a red, frothy, upflung rapids below. Shefford bowed his head over Fay and saw no more, nor felt, nor heard. What seemed a long time after that, the broken voice of the cowboy recalled him to his labors.

The boat was half full of water. Nas Ta Bega scooped out great sheets of it with his hands. Shefford sprang to aid him, found the shovel, and plunged into the task. Slowly but surely they emptied the boat.

And then Shefford saw that twilight had fallen. Joe was working the craft toward a narrow bank of sand, to which presently they came. The Indian sprang out to moor to a rock.

The fugitives went ashore. Weary and silent and drenched, they dropped on the warm sand.

But Shefford could not sleep. The river kept him awake. In the distance it rumbled, low, deep, reverberating. Near at hand, it was a thing of mutable mood. It moaned, whined, mocked, and laughed. It had the soul of a devil.

It was a river that had cut its way to the bowels of the earth, and its nature was destructive. It harbored no life. Fighting its way through those dead walls, cutting and tearing and wearing, its heavy burden of silt was death, destruction, and decay.

A silent river—a murmuring, strange, fierce, terrible, thundering river of the desert! Even in the dark it seemed to wear the hue of blood.

All night long Shefford heard it, and toward the dark hours before dawn, when a restless, broken sleep came to him, his dreams were dreams of a river of sounds.

All the beautiful sounds he knew and

loved he heard—the sigh of the wind in the pines, the mourn of the wolf, the cry of the laughing-gull, the murmur of running brooks, the song of a child, the whisper of a woman. And there were the boom of the surf, the roar of the north wind in the forest, the roll of thunder. And there were the sounds not of earth—a river of the universe rolling the planets, engulfing the stars, pouring the sea of blue into infinite space.

Night with its fitful dreams passed. Dawn lifted the bony gloom out of the cañon, and sunlight, far up on the ramparts, renewed Shefford's spirit. He rose and woke the others. Fay's wistful smile still held its faith. They ate of the gritty, water-soaked food.

Then they embarked. The current carried them swiftly down and out of hearing of the last rapid. The character of the river and the cañon changed. The current lessened to a slow, smooth, silent, eddying flow. The walls grew straight, sheer, gloomy, and vast.

Shefford noted these features, but he was listening so hard for the roar of the next rapid that he scarcely appreciated them. All the fugitives were listening. Every bend in the cañon—and now the turns were numerous—might hold a rapid.

Shefford strained his ears. He imagined the low, dull, strange rumble. He had it in his ears, yet there was the growing sensation of silence.

"Shore this 's a dead place," muttered Lassiter.

"She's only slowed up for a bigger plunge," replied Joe. "Listen! Hear that?"

But there was no true sound. Joe only imagined what he expected and hated and dreaded to hear.

Mile after mile they drifted through the silent gloom between those vast and magnificent walls. After the speed, the turmoil, the whirling, shrieking, thundering, the never-ceasing sound and change and motion of the rapids above, this slow, quiet drifting, this utter, absolute silence, these eddying stretches of still water below, worked strangely upon Shefford's mind. He feared he was going mad.

There was no change to the silence, no help for the slow drift, no lessening of the strain. And the hours of the day

passed as moments, the sun crossed the blue gap above, the golden lights hung on the upper walls, the gloom returned, and still there was only the dead, vast, insupportable silence.

There came bends where the current quickened, ripples widened, long lanes of little waves roughened the surface; but they made no sound.

And then the fugitives turned through a V-shaped vent in the cañon. The ponderous walls sheered away from the river. There were space and sunshine, and far beyond this league-wide open rose vermilion-colored cliffs. A mile below the river disappeared in a dark, box-like passage, whence came a rumble that made Shefford's flesh creep.

Joe Lake flung high his arms, and let out the stentorian yell that had rolled down to the fugitives as they waited at the mouth of Nonnezoshe Boco. But now it had a wilder, more exultant note. Strange how he shifted his gaze to Fay Larkin!

"Girl! Get up and look!" he called. "The ferry! The ferry!"

Then he bent his brawny back over the steering-oar, and the clumsy craft slowly turned toward the left-hand shore, where a long, low bank of green willows and cottonwoods gave welcome relief to the eyes. Upon the opposite side of the river Shefford saw a boat similar to the one he was in moored to the bank.

"Shore, if I ain't losin' my eyes, I seen an Injun with a red blanket," said Lassiter.

"Yes, Lassiter!" cried Shefford. "Look, Fay! Look, Jane! See! Indians—*hogans*—mustangs—there above the green bank!"

The boat glided slowly shoreward. And the deep, hungry, terrible rumble of the remorseless river became something no more to dread.

CHAPTER XXII.

WILLOW SPRINGS.

TWO days' travel from the river, along the saw-toothed range of Echo Cliffs, stood Presbrey's trading-post, a little, red-stone square house in a green and pretty valley called Willow Springs.

It was nearing the time of sunset—that gorgeous hour of color in the Paint-

ed Desert—when Shefford and his party rode down upon the post.

The scene lacked the wildness characteristic of Kayenta or Red Lake. There were wagons and teams, white men and Indians, burros, sheep, lambs, mustangs saddled and unsaddled, dogs, and chickens. A young, sweet-faced woman stood in the door of the post, and she it was who first sighted the fugitives. Presbrey was weighing bags of wool on a scale. When she called he lazily turned, as to wonder at her eagerness.

Then he flung up his head, with its shock of heavy hair, in a start of surprise, and his florid face lost its indolence to become wreathed in a huge smile.

"Haven't seen a white person in six months!" was his extraordinary greeting.

An hour later Shefford, clean-shaven, comfortably clothed once more, found himself a different man; and when he saw Fay in white again, with a new and indefinable light shining through that old, haunting shadow in her eyes, then the world changed, and he embraced perfect happiness.

There was a dinner such as Shefford had not seen for many a day—such as Fay had never seen—such as brought to Jane Withersteen's eyes the dreamy memory of the bountiful feasts which, long years ago, had been her pride. And there was a story told to the curious trader and his kind wife—a story, with its beginning back in those past years, of riders of the purple sage, of Surprise Valley then and now, of Fay Larkin as a child, of the flight down Nonnezoshe Boco and the Cañon, of a great cowboy and a noble Indian.

Presbrey stared with his deep-set eyes and wagged his tousled head and stared again; then, with the quick perception of the practical desert man, he said:

"I'm sending teamsters into Flagstaff to-morrow. Wife and I will go along with you. We've light wagons. Three days maybe—or four—and we'll be there. Shefford, I'm going to see you marry Fay Larkin!"

Fay and Jane and Lassiter showed strangely against this background of approaching civilization. And Shefford realized more than ever the loneliness and

isolation and wildness of so many years for them.

When the woman had retired, Shefford and the men talked a while. Then Joe Lake rose to stretch his big frame.

"Friends, reckon I'm all in," he said. "Good night."

In passing, he laid a heavy hand on Shefford's shoulder.

"Well, you got out," he remarked. "I've only a queer notion how. But *some one* beside an Indian and a rustler guided you out! Be good to the girl. Good-by, pard!"

Shefford grasped the big hand, and in the emotion of the moment did not catch the significance of Joe's last words.

Later, Shefford stepped outside into the starlight for a few moments' quiet walk and thought before he went to bed. It was a white night. The coyotes were yelping. The stars shone steadfast, bright, cold.

Nas Ta Bega stalked out of the shadow of the house and joined Shefford. They walked in silence. Shefford's heart was too full for utterance, and the Indian seldom spoke at any time. When Shefford was ready to go in, Nas Ta Bega extended his hand.

"Good-by — *bi-nai!*" he said strangely, using English and Navajo in what Shefford supposed to be merely a good night. The starlight shone full upon the dark, inscrutable face of the Indian. Shefford bade him good night, and then watched him stride away in the silver gloom.

But next morning Shefford understood. Nas Ta Bega and Joe Lake were gone. It was a shock to Shefford. Yet what could he have said to either? Joe had shirked saying good-by to him and Fay. And the Indian had gone out of Shefford's life as he had come into it.

What these two men represented in Shefford's uplift was too great for the

present to define, but they and the desert that had developed them had taught him the meaning of life. He might fail often, since failure was the lot of his kind; but could he ever fail again in faith in man or God, while he had mind to remember the Indian and the rustler?

Still, though he placed them on a noble height and loved them well, there would always abide with him a sorrow for Joe Lake, and a sleepless and eternal regret for that Indian on his lonely cedar slope with the spirits of his vanishing race calling him.

Willow Springs appeared to be a lively place that morning. Presbrey was gay, and his sweet-faced wife was excited. The teamsters were a jolly, whistling lot. And the lean mustangs kicked and bit at each other. The trader had brought out two light wagons for the trip, and after the manner of desert men, desired to start at sunrise.

Far across the Painted Desert towered the San Francisco peaks, black-timbered, blue-cañoned, purple-hazed, with white snow, like the clouds, around their summits.

Jane Withersteen looked at the radiant Fay and lived again in her happiness. And at last excitement had been communicated to the old gunman.

"Shore we're goin' to live with Fay an' John, an' be near Venters an' Bess, an' see the blacks again, Jane. An' Venters will tell you, as he did me, how Wrangle run Black Star off his legs!"

All connected with that early start was sweet, sad, hopeful.

And so they rode away from Willow Springs, through the green fields of alfalfa and cottonwood, down the valley, with its smoking *hogans* and whistling mustangs and scarlet-blanketed Indians, and out upon the bare, ridgy, colorful desert toward the rosy sunrise.

THE END.

Don't fail to read in the October ARGOSY the opening instalment of a three-part tale

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

BY FRED JACKSON

There will be eleven chapters of it, and for a mystery yarn we'll match it up against anything that has been turned out this year. It's not the same old thing of a jewel story by any means. Get the October ARGOSY on the 15th of September, read these eleven chapters of the first instalment, and be convinced.

Miss O'Flannaghan's Romance



By Bonita Carroll

THE fact that this Chicago shirt-waist factory was running overtime on "ninety-eight-cent specials, open-work front, warranted to boom the lingerie business"—as was feelingly stated in a bulletin directed to the retail trade—could not stem the undercurrent of suppressed excitement which filled the stitching-room. The news had come from the cutting department with Maria Gitani and a pile of sleeves so enveloping Maria's blooming countenance that not even her Psyche was visible over the top.

There were three long aisles in the room, and on either side of each a row of crashing, crunching, pounding sewing-machines driven by the power that whirled in the castings above. Each machine bore its burden of cotton cloth to be stitched into so many dozens of fronts or backs or neckbands in order that the girl whose number corresponded to the number of the machine might earn her three-fifty or five a week.

But those details made little difference when the social lure was beckoning. Maria came down the room, stopping at each machine to drop a dozen sleeves, and saying in a triumphant undertone:

"You'd better get into your glad rags, girls, as soon as work shuts down to-night, if you've got a steady. The cutters is going to run off a dance to-night at Jerry's. Tickets, including lady and gent, a plate of cream and cigars, fifteen cents."

At the extreme end of the room Miss O'Flannaghan was ripping. Ten years before Miss O'Flannaghan had presented herself, fresh from County Cork, at the boss's office. She was in her twenties then, tall, angular, and not good to look at because her hair was sandy and she had freckles. She wore a homespun coat with such abbreviated sleeves that she appeared to have four elbows, which fact, also, detracted from any possible personal charms.

"Miss O'Flannaghan, sir. Beggin' your pardon, sir, it's *gh*, not *g*, sir—always."

Thus forever the social line of County Cork, which separates the O'Flannaghans from the O'Flannagans, was established.

"I'd be afther wantin' a job."

The boss was good natured, and Miss O'Flannaghan got her job. That was ten years ago, and she was still

working at the same job. She was still so much Miss O'Flannaghan that generations of other shirt-waist hands had come and gone—Katie and Lillies and Nellies and Rosies—and not one of them had ever asked Miss O'Flannaghan if she had a first name. She was presumably in her thirties now, and she was still angular. She wore the same coat, but she appeared to have six elbows instead of four, because long tending of the sewing-machine results in large, crooked wrists.

No one had ever thought of wondering how Miss O'Flannaghan lived on her three-fifty per. As a matter of fact, she paid one and a half of it for the privilege of sleeping in a dark hall-bedroom and making her tea over a miniature oil-stove. The surplus did not allow for much gaiety. Years ago Miss O'Flannaghan had cherished a mad impulse to take the "L" to Clark Street. Later had come a second and even wilder desire to go up to Lincoln Park and see the monkeys, but neither wish had been fulfilled.

Miss O'Flannaghan's track from her hall-bedroom across to Twenty-third Street and the factory, after ten years of traveling, was beaten hard. Although many energetic young bosses had threatened to lay her off, news of so dire a calamity had never reached her ears, and she still plodded along, and spent half of each day ripping out the mistakes of the day before. It was a cluster of crooked tucks at present, and she bent over her work with patient, blundering fingers as Maria neared her.

"Why, Miss O'Flannaghan, ain't you finished the dozen you had yesterday yet?"

Maria tripped lightly over to the other side of the room, but as she went Miss O'Flannaghan caught an echo of conversation drifting back.

"Dance at Jerry's to-night. Fifteen cents for lady and gent. Sure I'm goin'; ain't I got a steady? Well, you just bet!"

A warning gong sounded. There was a hasty removal of side-combs to assist in straightening pompadours, a rush for hats and coats, and a sound of giggling as the men overflowed from the packing and cutting rooms. Miss O'Flannaghan folded her work and pinned on her hat with a look of unusual and fierce determination radiating from her freckles. Never in all her thirty-odd years had she been able to boast of a steady yet. Miss O'Flannaghan had decided to go to the dance at Jerry's.

The yard was almost deserted as she came down the stairs. Men and girls were hurrying along the street, or hanging to the straps and platforms of the crowded surface-cars. In the dim distance of the boiler-room door could be seen outlined a figure with a lantern in one hand and a coal shovel in the other. Miss O'Flannaghan felt a cold shiver go down her spine as, instead of going toward the gate, she crossed the yard. Then she suddenly became feverishly warm and trembling as the figure loomed beside her, set down the lantern, and said pleasantly:

"Howdy, Miss O'Flannaghan? Nice night. But ain't you later than ordinary?"

"Yes — no — yes, Edward," said Miss O'Flannaghan, pulling in mad haste from her pocket of her petticoat a small, flat purse.

She counted out two dimes and five pennies, which she held toward him.

"Ed—there's—the girls said there was a dance at Jerry's to-night. Only fifteen cents for lady and gent and—and cigars, Edward. I was thinkin' maybe you'd be afther wantin' to go."

Ed set down his shovel and looked in amazement at the awkward, stammering woman before him, but at last a gleam of intelligence shone in his blue Irish eyes.

"Well, now, Miss O'Flannaghan, I ain't never made no pretense at being much of a socialist, but—"

With true chivalry his hand closed over the money.

"But I don't mind going around to Jerry's for a little while. No. 2883 First Avenue you live? All right; I'll stop for you at eight-fifteen sharp, Miss O'Flannaghan. So-long!"

And Edward Maroney, stoker and gentleman, picked up his shovel and retired to the depths of the furnace-room.

Miss O'Flannaghan almost ran to the yard-gate. In the street outside she tumbled over a small newsboy and upset his cart, whereupon he promptly gave chase, bawling at the top of his lungs:

"Cop! Cop! Around the block! Great, gawky, wall-eyed greeny!"

But Miss O'Flannaghan sped on unheeding, stopping only once on the way to No. 2883. At the corner of the block there was a hair-store with alluring bargains in the way of switches and puffs displayed in the window. In the front of the window lay a set of brilliant auburn curls marked:

50 cents

Miss O'Flannaghan opened her purse and counted its contents. To-morrow would be pay-day. She went in the store, and in another minute an observant passer-by might have seen the suave clerk remove the curls from their place of honor and hand them over the counter, wrapped in a paper bag.

"Ain't it grand, Jim?" asked Maria as she and her partner whirled madly around the back room at Jerry's with their cheeks tightly glued together, which is quite the mode, and is known as the postage-stamp dance in certain circles.

"Don't you love the two-step, Jim?"

"Sure, and I love somebody else, too," responded Jim in an affectionate whisper, leading boldly into the center of the room and knocking against two or three couples as he went.

"Pshaw!" returned Maria, tossing her hair back from her forehead and rearranging Jim's flaming red necktie.

"Ain't you the jollier, Jim? The cutters certainly do know how to run a dance out of sight, though."

The tables had been pushed back, and festoons of red and green crape paper made a gala scene. At the bar-end of the room sat the musicians, perspiring, out of time and tune, but never wearied as they alternated two-step and waltz, waltz and two-step, with unfailing regularity. Round and round the dancers whirled, while the fiddles scraped, the air grew thick with the smoke of free cigars, and the belles of the ball "split" dances recklessly.

But in the corner by the door sat a late couple, the man in a suit of such huge checkered stuff that he looked like nothing so much as a rolled up chessboard. The woman wore her factory-dress, but her neck was garnished with her one bit of color—the pink bow that had adorned her pin-cushion at home; and fastened uncertainly over one ear was a row of vivid auburn curls in startling contrast with the rest of her hair. She was freckled, but so purple was her countenance with righteous blushes that the freckles were overpowered.

"It ain't decent," she was saying in faltering tones to her escort, her bony fingers lacing and unlacing nervously. "They haven't no call to dance so close foreninst each other."

Jim and Maria whirled by.

"Git on to Miss O'Flannaghan and Ed," Jim remarked.

"Git on to the hair. But ain't Ed's suit grand? Leave me go, Jim; I'm going to make a mash on Ed."

Maria broke away from the embrace of Jim, who promptly consoled himself with Lilly. She threw herself down in a chair beside Ed. Maria was sweet-scented and red-lipped, and she wore a dress of some clinging, thin, white stuff. She leaned close to Ed, until he could feel her breath warm upon his cheek.

"Evening, Ed," she greeted him, totally ignoring Miss O'Flannaghan.

"You ain't dancing?"

"No; well—no," stammered Ed, his breath coming quick and chokingly. "I ain't much on the socialist—but—"

He felt a soft hand rest for a moment upon his own.

"But—I might try."

The next moment a checkered suit was twirling madly around the hall, and in its wake was an embroidered skirt, while the warm, curly little head of Maria lay confidently on Ed's shoulder.

Miss O'Flannaghan, the only person who was not dancing, sat in her corner with folded hands and watched through the haze of smoke the line of partners circle by her and then circle again unceasingly. The false curls slipped lower and lower as if in abasement at not having fulfilled their mission. They finally came entirely loose, and Miss O'Flannaghan put them in her pocket. She grew dizzy, and as in a dream she watched the slow hands of the clock point to ten, eleven, eleven-thirty.

The ice-cream was passed and devoured, but no one served Miss O'Flannaghan. At twelve, a great lump choking her throat and overflowing in hot tears that blinded her, she started for the door. A crowd of boisterous boys and girls hailed her in the street outside:

"Lookin' for Ed Maroney, Miss O'Flannaghan? Ed and Maria Gitani went out an hour ago."

It was the typical twelve o'clock of a rainy night in Chicago. Up-town the theaters were emptying, the lights of the restaurants showing in big, wet blotches on the sidewalks outside, the cabs were flickering their weird yellow eyes, and the horses' feet were splashing away.

But down here it is equally as gay. The little foreign vaudeville has just begun its variety-bill again. The sound

of music trails through the mist from the glittering saloons. The push-cart merchants are pulling down their portable covers and wrapping their wares preparatory to going home. So also does Gizzio, Italian vender of fruits.

It has been a fat evening for Gizzio, in spite of the rain. There were the pears, so enticing with their yellow-cheeked exteriors—but so soft as to their insides. Gizzio has sold them to the last one.

The small, hard lemons have gone as a job-lot to Jerry, who ran out at an inauspicious moment. So it has been with the apples, the oranges, and the chestnuts; there has been a purchaser for all.

Gizzio stood in the rain, which only made his black curls kink the more tightly, and counted his coppers and nickels. It was well that they made so round a sum.

Was it not necessary that Gizzio put coppers in the bank? Was he not the affianced lover of the daughter of his old friend Gitani? The daughter was a comely lass, even now working at the shirt-waist factory to earn money for the trousseau to be.

Gizzio let the rain drizzle unprotested upon his cart as he stood in the gutter and dreamed.

She had red, red lips and a white throat, had that daughter of Gitani. There would be a brass band to head the procession as they walked through the streets to the Chapel of Our Lady, and the girl would wear a green bodice and a white veil—ah! Gizzio drew a long breath.

Suddenly he leaned forward with eyes bright and narrow and put his hand to his hip. Coming slowly down through the muddy block were two persons, a man and a woman. The man's derby was awry. He wore a checkered suit. His arm was about the waist of the woman, who was small, curly-haired, red-lipped, and white-throated. With a lunge Gizzio was upon them.

"You—you greeny! You take my girl Maria? I see about that!"

There was a frightened shriek as Ed Maroney plumped into the gutter under the impact of Gizzio's strong right fist. Then Maria cast herself upon the neck of her *fiancé*, well pleased to be rid of her new conquest.

It was at this same fetching hour of twelve that Miss O'Flannaghan was taking her unescorted way up Twenty-Third Street. She had never before been out so late, and she kept close to the stoops of the tenements, racking her arms as she plodded along in an agony of fear at the shadows which stretched their dripping lengths beside her.

She was forever humiliated in her own eyes. For an endless stretch of factory years she saw herself panting across the yard lest she be seen by a man with a coal-shovel in the door of the boiler-room. Her supreme effort had been a failure.

"Ed's feckle-minded—feckle-minded," she reiterated dully until the words seemed to beat themselves against her brain in time to the splash of the rain-drops on the curbing, and she did not hear the quick steps behind her that came nearer—nearer—and then stopped with a sudden clutch of her arm.

"Howdy, Miss O'Flannaghan?" said an apologetic voice.

Miss O'Flannaghan turned.

"W-hy, Edward, I thought you had went home! And where's your coat? And your pants is all mud!"

"A fresh cop guy took me coat," said Edward, which was quite true; a policeman had restrained Gizzio just as he had got well started and had attempted to "run in" Ed also; but Ed had eluded him, leaving his good checkered coat in the hands of justice.

"I missed you in Jerry's, Miss O'Flannaghan," went on Ed.

Heaven forgive him for his lies—he lied that night with such good intent!

"I was slitherin' along Twenty-Third Street, tryin' to catch up with you, and I run into a cop and he took me coat. It was a better coat nor his. You know what cops is, Miss O'Flannaghan."

"Yes," murmured Miss O'Flannaghan sympathetically, although she had no intimate acquaintance with the police. She could acquiesce to anything with that strong arm holding hers.

There seemed to be nothing more to say for a block or two. Then they passed a ten-cent restaurant, from which there issued a cheerful odor of beef and onions.

"Miss O'Flannaghan," asked Ed in a hushed undertone, "kin you make a stew?"

"I used to make a grand stew in the old country," said Miss O'Flannaghan bravely.

There was a second pause. Then Ed spoke again, his voice husky with emotion:

"Did you ever think of livin' in a small flat, Miss O'Flannaghan—say, about an eight-dollar one? I been boardin' round off and on for five years now. One do get fearful tired boardin'!"

Miss O'Flannaghan could hardly trust her voice to answer.

"Anybody could do for a flat, Ed."

Then, growing bolder:

"I don't think anybody would fooster so if they could stay to home and keep house for a while—like I fooster in the factory."

They had turned down to First Avenue now, and had stopped in front of No. 2883. Ed did not let go of her arm.

"Miss O'Flannaghan," he stammered thickly, "you ain't got no steady, have you?"

Miss O'Flannaghan was too choky to answer, but Ed went on recklessly:

"Ain't there no place that you would like to go next Sunday that I could take you?"

Miss O'Flannaghan fumbled for

her latch-key that Ed might not see the happy unshed tears which filled her eyes.

"I've been thinkin' for a good many years that I'd like to go up to the park and see the monkeys, Ed."

"We'll go Sunday afternoon as soon as I get the fires banked," returned Ed. "Good night, Miss O'Flannaghan."

Miss O'Flannaghan raised her head with a sweet, new dignity.

"Mary Anne, Ed," she said as she opened the door and stumbled up the dark stairway to her hall-bedroom.

Then the rain suddenly ceased, and a star flickered and shone bravely out in the dull sky, a challenge to the lantern of the factory watchman and the great arc light of the saloon.

The Sneeze Play



by

Will H. Greenfield

WHEN Kemble Skirm returned from his first spring training-trip with the Guerrillas, Manager Tommy McNabb, who was a being without soul, told him to get a job in a hotel because he was indubitably the best waiter in captivity, having struck out on called strikes in every game in which he was permitted to participate. And according to Pete Strecker, the Guerrilla scout, Skirm had taken the manager's advice, and was "carrying everything before him" in an obscure Western hotel, when he came under Pete's appraisive eye for the second time, just two years later.

It seems that Pete was served by Skirm. In a very brief while the latter proved that as a waiter he was a most triumphant failure. Thus Pete:

"You don't seem to be a howling success as a grub-slinger, Kemble."

"I get only ten dollars a week for this," grumbled Kemble Skirm.

"There's fellows can't pitch ball any better than you who are pulling down thirteen hundred a season," said Pete.

"But McNabb said I didn't know anything about pitching baseball," sighed Skirm.

"Well, you don't know anything about waiting, either," said Pete, "and you might as well grab that extra money that goes with the twirler's job."

And so Kemble Skirm came back to the Guerrillas, to his own unmeasured delight and to the mild astonishment of Tommy McNabb. Not a man on the team would admit that Kem was

burdened with excess baggage in the way of intellect; McNabb himself thought Skirm was not worth the stuffing in a bubble, and something of this kind got embedded in the occiputs of the fans.

But still Skirm stuck. He was the butt of all sorts of jokes; a compulsory dealer in staple and fancy trouble; the favorite of every rye-balled spirit that had the price multitudinously. He had little chance to show his ability, but he made good as a rescue pitcher on several occasions, and everybody went right on busily liking him.

Skirm was endowed with a royal instinct for serving others to the utmost of his powers, doing this as a simple matter of course, feeling only that all he could do was much less than what was needed. The one ruling idea that governed his whole life was to work where he was placed and to obey those in authority. And he worked always as if bodily needs or material comforts did not exist.

On two or three occasions he asked McNabb to let him start a game. Tommy requested him explosively to go to thunder. Then, one fine afternoon, when Skirm complained that he felt like a supernumerary standing in the wings and watching the development of the drama, McNabb sent him in to pitch against the hard-hitting Ballbusters.

In the first inning a batter reached first base after two men had been retired. Skirm took a long wind-up, and almost before he pitched the runner raced to second, getting such a lead the catcher could not have potted him with a Krupp gun. When Skirm struck out the batter and came in to the bench Tommy McNabb, arms waving, demanded hotly:

"Why didn't you catch that fellow on first base?"

"What fellow on first, boss?"

"That guy that stole second."

"No one told me there was a runner on first, boss," replied Skirm.

McNabb was dazed for an instant.

Then he turned on his infield and shouted angrily:

"Here you, Knight, Tolin, Murphy—all of you! There's one thing I want understood right now. Hereafter whenever a runner reaches first or second or third bases, you fellows tell Skirm about it. I won't have any more of these secrets on the team, and I mean what I say, an' don't you guys forget it!"

Skirm took the first opportunity to whisper to the choking infielders:

"Don't mind Tommy, if he was a little hard on you; I'll keep my eyes peeled, too, after this."

It seemed never to enter his head that McNabb's biting sarcasm could even remotely apply to himself. He was, in short, the inimitable, illimitable limit.

Warmed as if with a divine torrent of joy, Skirm went resolutely ahead with his game, won it handily, and shook hands with McNabb in pure, sublimated ignorance. And not one of his teammates collaborated in a laugh at his expense.

Skirm's first full-game victory was to him sweeter than May honey. It convinced him that he was making comfortable progress. Doing rescue-work was all right in its place, but now he felt that he was not in a place for it. McNabb took him on the first trip West, and did not let him start in a single game. Two of his most reliable pitchers were on the sick-list, and why he didn't use Skirm was, as Dunderbary said: "One of those things no fellow can find out."

No word of protest came from Skirm; he did not so much as ask for another chance at the common enemy. He dressed and undressed with the team, warmed up a little every day, discussed the game after the evening meal, and continued to make himself a friend and a philosopher. Verdantly he allowed them to convince him that Lake Erie was the Mississippi, and the Indian pitcher who always beat the Guerrillas a North Carolina negro. In

every city he struck he conversed with the baseball bugs, the brother lodge-member, the retired player, the player out of a job, and just plain rooters who wanted the distinction of buying something for a *bona-fide* ball-player, thus bask in the light of the famous.

Fresh from the weeds, he didn't say much, but he used his ears and eyes and did a lot of deep-sea thinking. Of course, he fell for a lot of merry stunts projected by his fellow players, but with such cheerful alacrity and unfailing good nature that they actually entertained doubts of his rusticity.

Still, the absurdity of the idea carried its own refutation. Skirm was a simpleton — an irresistibly comical guy, who filled a place in the cosmos comparable to that occupied by a migratory beetle. He was far too amiable to be bright.

Hope had not departed, but she was putting on her wraps when Skirm was told that he would be used against the Bears; and several members of the Guerrillas could not help remarking that McNabb's final recognition of the simple-minded pitcher marked the cure of one of the most obstinate cases of astigmatism on record. Skirm had probably learned more about the game than any other recruit before him — there was so much more he did not know.

With the long-looked-for chance at hand, Skirm went into the box that day feeling peculiarly distraught. He could not refuse duty; yet he was as jumpy as a bullfrog, and his bearing suggested that of a man who was marching to the death-chair.

The Bears were as pitiless as a pack of famished panthers. Skirm was the personification of inefficiency. He was wild and ineffective, and fielded his position in a slovenly way.

As a matter of cold, statistical fact, he issued eight bases on balls and yielded nine hits for seven runs in the two innings he worked. Then McNabb sent him to the club-house

with the information that the possibility of his release was now within the confines of immediate realization. Manager Tommy could not say more — except in asterisks.

Time passed on, as time will; but Skirm did not receive another assignment to start a game, and he was used but a few times toward the close of the season — in games that were hopelessly lost. He caromed around the circuit with the team, however, always hugging the hope of being restored to McNabb's good opinion. And while the latter countered Skirm's cordial advances with icy repulsion, nevertheless he felt the impulse of friendliness whenever he looked in Skirm's soft, brown, melting, doelike eyes.

It was a raw day, cloudy and cheerless, when Skirm got another chance to display his wares — this time against the Colonels, who were running neck-and-neck for the pennant with the badly crippled Guerrillas. There were only two more games to play, and the Colonels needed but one of them to tie the count — two games would assure them the position that would bring to them the championship, together with the much-coveted pennant.

This time Skirm felt abundantly equal to his undertaking and was keenly impatient to see what he could do. He began the game auspiciously enough with two strike-outs, and as the contest went on his list grew like a snowball hurrying to keep an engagement at the bottom of a hill. A perfect roar of delighted applause surged up from the crowd when he struck out the last three men, winning his game by a score of 7 to 2, and hanging up the biggest strike-out record of the season.

Of course, Manager Tommy was happy. But in the midst of joy he felt the near presence of calamity, a boding at the heart which nothing could silence. That night Duncan, Tommy's star pitcher and the only man in condition, broke his pitching-

arm in a friendly boxing-bout at a local athletic club. McNabb's thoughts turned immediately to Skirm, because with the rest of the staff crippled he had nobody else to think of, and because the ex-waiter's work that day had been a piece of consummate artistry.

Aside from this, the Colonels could only tie things up by winning. Thus, he would still have a chance to nurse one of his regulars into shape for the rubber, if there should be any necessity for playing such an important game. Kemble Skirm, therefore, was a life-saver. Tommy congratulated himself on his ability to see through the darkest night the possibility of a dawn, and to find in the least-likely chance the seed of a great opportunity.

The spectators of the next day's game saw Skirm ascend the pitcher's mound—a tall, stoop-shouldered fellow, with shuffling gait and a long, pale, dreamy face, which was as clear and ingenuous as a child's. An actor making up for the part of an idealized farmer could not have proved fidelity to nature better than by reproducing Skirm's fresh, open countenance.

The heart of Skirm was big and red and unafraid. When he had retired the first two batters on strikes his laughter was as frank as a mountain rill. The third man was an easy out, Skirm getting the assist.

In the seventh inning the Guerrillas led by a score of 1-0, but it was easy to divine that their pitcher was weakening. The Colonels started to hit the ball, and hit it hard; however, fast fielding held them in check. The game settled down to a bit of science—a chess-game in which every move seemed prearranged. Neither side scored, both pitchers doing gilt-edged work and every man moving with the precision of a machine. It was thrilling—score 1-0—and impossible to get a man past first.

The spectators, keyed to intensity, were howling like Comanches.

At length the ninth inning opened. A tense feeling seemed to hold the vast throng spellbound. Only the sandwich man in the bleachers fought the restraint; he yelled his wares in burlesque: "Sam handwich, gents, for five! Ham sandwich for five!"

Skirm was ready to face the music; if he could pull through this inning, the Colonels' last, he would exchange the sackcloth of the slave for the imperial purple. The Colonels rattled their bats grimly, as unsociable as a pessimistic bulldog guarding a threatened melon-patch.

Up came Sanderson, the do-or-die spirit exuding from his iron visage. Captain Murphy called encouragement from second base and awaited the issue with a hope-lit serenity.

Skirm's victory over the batter was sweeping and unequivocal. As he retired the dangerous Sanderson on strikes, Captain Murphy felt like going out and buying fifty hats and taking them all off one by one to Mr. Kemble Skirm.

Evans, the next man up, slashed wickedly at a bad one, and, missing, tried to cross the enemy by bunting. But Skirm came in like a lightning-flash and tossed him out at first with effortless ease.

Two down! The Guerrilla rooters breathed a sigh of perfect ecstasy. Manager Tommy's face was outbeaming the sun. An undesired possibility of failure had been weighing his heart down, but he had the patience of Job without Job's gift of complaint. Not being addicted to dealing in futurities that could never come to pass, he felt inexplicably content.

Here was Conway, one of the brainiest hitters in the league and a tough man to pitch to in that he always made the pitcher extend himself to the utmost.

Three balls and one strike!

Conway tugged at the peak of his cap, gripped his hat short, ran up on the next ball, and cracked it over Captain Murphy's head for a single.

Just to show that their confidence was fully and completely at home, the loyal Guerrilla fans rose up and cheered Skirm to the echo. They begged him, "Don't mind that!" and stamped and howled till he doffed his cap. But when he gave the next man, Hoffman, three straight balls they suspended their vocal exercises to indulge in breathless prayers to the great god Mars to laurel them in glorious victory.

As Skirm stepped into the box to pitch the next ball his knees suddenly sagged, his arms dropped limply to his sides, his head bobbed forward and back, and then, after a lengthening pause—

Ker-choo!

Came a terrific sneeze.

The crowd laughed. The Colonels' coach at first base growled at Conway:

"You could have gone down on that!"

Then, raising his voice:

"The cold in his feet has gone to his head! Come on, Hoffman!"

And Hoffman obeyed his teammate's injunction, for just as he was about to deliver the ball, Skirm had to sneeze again, and the fourth ball sailed perilously wide of the plate, only the catcher's agility preventing a passed ball.

Captain Gleason, of the Colonels, now faced Skirm. The Colonel rooters seemed to be on the verge of madness. Men were screaming and dancing and profanely entreating Gleason to "Kill it!" and "Hit it a mile!" "Smash it!" and "Knock the cover off the ball!"

With another twitch of the head and a perfectly audible *ker-choo!* Skirm jerked up a ball that did not come within hailing distance of the plate, but the heavy-hitting Gleason, not to be denied, lunged viciously for it and caught it on the end of his fearful bat. Up—up! soared the ball, a white-clad Guerrilla in the right field speeding swiftly under it, arm up-raised. Higher and higher the white

sphere mounted, and then dropped gracefully over the fence—just three feet inside foul territory.

A Gargantuan sigh came from the Guerrilla rooters; but the Colonel fans were on their feet, roaring like unto the bulls of Bashan:

"He's all in!"

"Put it there again, old scout!"

"Don't let him walk you, Gleason!"

"It's all over now!"

These and similar admonitions and bits of advice were screamed from hundreds of hoarse throats. To Guerrilla fans it really seemed as if the mis-chief was as good as done and the doubtful issue decided.

"Now everybody move!" barked the Colonel coaches. "He's up in the air—the yellow's showing! Go get him! Go get him!"

With wide grins the runners walked off their bases and began prancing along the paths; Gleason clutched his bat, his jaw set, and the din in the stands and bleachers rose to Bedlam pitch.

Skirm gave a resolute hitch at his belt and stepped into the pitcher's box. His nose wrinkled, his features corrugated amid a roar of laughter from players and spectators to whom he was the cynosure of all eyes. . . . And then—

"*Kerchoo!*" he emitted, and rifled the ball to First-baseman Tolin, who tagged the dumfounded Hoffman a good yard away from the base for the third and final out.

"It wasn't a cold, boss," Skirm told Manager McNabb in the dressing-room. "I lost everything I had all of a sudden, and I couldn't make that ball behave. I sneezed to make the guys on base get reckless while I pretended to be trying to get the batter between kerchoos."

"You're a nut, Skirm," said Manager Tommy, chuckling—"just the kind of a nut to fit our old wagon. Get me?"

Luck of the Devil



by Bob Strang

THE night was cold, even for northern Alaska. The one little straggling street that formed the camp of Kobuk was deserted, but behind the storm-doors of the saloons and dance-halls there was enough doing.

Some husky dogs hitched to sleds were curled up in the snow in the street, while their owners caroused or gambled in one of the resorts.

In the Last Chance saloon business was normal, though it was after two in the morning. A row of "all-ins" occupied benches facing the bar around the sides of the gambling-room in the rear.

A shock-headed youth played a piano on a little, raised platform. On his long, pale, nervous face was the dismal look of a drug-fiend. As he played "My Old Kentucky Home," tears coursed from his half-closed eyes; he reveled in a sublime state of maudlin sentimentality.

On the left of the gambling-room, and separated by a row of timber pillars, was the Monte Carlo dance-hall, where twelve or fifteen highly made-up women, jeweled and nuggeted, danced the square dance with as many moccasined miners, to music supplied by a cornet and violin. They shouted and stamped as they danced, clapping

in and clapping out each other, to the delight of the bench-warmers.

At the end of each dance the ladies led their escorts up to a little box-office in the corner, where each man laid down his dollar, in return for which a check good for fifty cents was handed each girl. Here and there stood an Eskimo in mukluks and parka, as stoical as his own totem-pole.

In the spacious gambling-room little bands of men were gathered around blanket-covered tables, over each of which hung suspended from the roof a large brass lamp that cast fitful gleams on the more or less tense faces of the players.

In the farthest corner from the entrance was a roulette-table, round which was gathered the largest crowd. At one end of it sat a little, shriveled-up man with a scrubby beard, a hanging nether lip, and glittering black eyes.

"Say, Shorty, Ben Levi over there's some gambler, ain't he?" whispered Three-Fingered Bill.

"I should say he is!" rejoined Shorty. "I knew Ben out in the Cœur de Lion country, and he was just the same as he is now. He goes out and makes a stake somewhere in mining or dry-goods, and never touches a card till his poke's bustin' full of gold. Then he turns himself loose.

He gambled away a good-paying mine once while he had a big gang of men working, too. Oh, he's some gambler, all right, Ben is! It's a crime, though, to see a man of his years go it the way he does."

Shorty pulled up his parka and stuck his hands deep in his mackinaw pants-pocket.

"He's never left that seat now for forty-eight hours; has only drank a few cups of black coffee, and I don't believe he's spoken half a dozen words in all that time," Three-Fingered observed. "Oh, he goes the limit, and then some."

Ben Levi was paying no attention whatever to his surroundings. His eyes left the little, whirling ball only long enough to pile up his winnings or to pick up one of the many stacks of chips in front of him, push it onto the table, and eagerly await the outcome.

One by one, the smaller players dropped out to concentrate their attention wholly on the duel between Faro Dick, the dealer, and Ben Levi. Twice during the sitting Ben had reduced the bank-roll of the house to three figures. He didn't know that, of course.

Many times had One-Eyed Riley, the proprietor of the Last Chance, changed the dealers on him in the hope of turning the luck of the house; but it was not until Faro Dick took the deal that luck went his way.

Twice on the dropping of the ball had One-Eyed been prepared to hand over the keys of the joint to Ben, and twice, with a long, deep breath of relief, had he returned them to his pocket, staggered to the bar, and drunk a tumblerful of his own hooch, his bloated face a pale green and his eyes protruding.

Ben at these times had chips in front of him aggregating sixty thousand dollars. Win or lose, his manner never changed, nor did the banter of the dealers affect him at all.

"I think I got ye going, Ben," rasped Dick as he raked in a thousand dollars in chips that Ben had just lost.

Levi said never a word, but pushed in two thousand on the green and waited. The crowd held its breath as the little ball spun on its fatal way, trickle, trickle, trickle—now slowing down—now past the white—the red—the blue—then puck!

"Ah-h!" came simultaneously from fifty throats as the little ball dropped into the green niche. Just a little pale and with the ghost of a smile, Faro pushed the ten thousand in chips over to Ben, who stacked them up without a tremor, closely watched by the greedy, envious eyes of the onlookers.

He then put three thousand on the black, but it came up red that time. The crowd sighed in sympathy. Alas, many of the lookers-on hadn't the price of a meal in their pockets, but all of them were intimate with the gyrations of the wheel—to their cost. And there is not the least doubt that had any one made them a present of money for a meal they would have sat down and played, forgetting all about the meal. They possessed a strange appearance in their moccasins, parkas, and fur caps, giving to the scene a typical Alaskan atmosphere.

"Got you again, Ben!" shouted Faro. "Stack 'em up as high as the roof; that's our limit. Five thousand on the black, the man says. Nobody else? Away she goes!"

And he spun the ball on its way.

"The red wins, gentlemen! Stack 'em up! Stack 'em up! Never venture, never win. Bet 'em up, boys!"

Ben hesitated as he pushed a stack of chips on the table—paused—drew them back again, and rubbed his forehead with a long, skinny hand. He was plainly all in.

Raising his head after a long, calculating look at his chips, his glance wandered to where the little ball reposed in one of the niches of the wheel. As he gazed there slowly grew the look of one under a hypnotic spell. Long he looked and steadily, until his eyes glowed like two live coals.

Suddenly tearing them away, he rose to his feet, and with trembling hands pushed all the chips he possessed onto the white. The onlookers gasped with awe, shuffled their feet, and craned their necks still closer. Then ensued a breathless pause.

"The white!" whispered Scotty excitedly. "Why, he'll break the house if he wins! That's ten to one, and he's got at least seven thousand on it. But what chances he's taking!"

Nervously Faro balanced the little ball between his finger and thumb, gave the wheel a turn with his left hand, and with a swift motion of his right, spun the ball on its fateful way. The commotion aroused by such a bet had drawn all the players from the other tables. They were all keyed up to the same pitch; all had the same tense look in their eyes and the same twitch about the lips.

Ben leaned forward over the table, his beard thrust out, his arms outstretched, his long, skinny hands closed like two knots, and his eyes fastened on the ball, as if by sheer force of will he would make it stop on the desired bracket.

The crowd gaped. The perspiration rolled down Faro's pale face. One-Eyed Riley breathed thickly and grasped the arm of a man on each side of him with the clutch of one ready to sink for the last time, his large, fishy eyes fastened on the ball.

Slower and slower went the wheel. Slower and slower twinkled the ball—slower—slower—

"He wins!" some one shouted.

But just as the ball was dropping into white the table was given a slight shake entirely unnoticed by the onlookers in their excitement—even by Ben—and the ball dropped back into the black, the color preceding it.

An unconscious hum of sympathy escaped from the throats of the crowd. Faro Dick wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"You're out o' luck, Ben!" shouted Scotty.

"All hands drink," intimated One-Eyed Riley in an expressive tone of relief, as he led the crowd to the bar, himself almost choking, his face red and neck swollen.

The throng surged forward unheeding of Ben, who had slipped back into his seat in utter collapse, his eyes wide and staring. It was but a moment he was overcome, however. Then he leaped to his feet, tore off his hat, threw back his head, and shrilled:

"By the hope that mine mother is in heaven, I swear never to bet another cent as long as I live! So help mine God!"

Those nearest him broke into a loud guffaw.

"Ben's quit the game for good," laughed Faro Dick.

Deigning them hardly a look, Ben picked up his hat and staggered through the back entrance into the moonlit silence of the night. His soul seemed to be in rags; the muscles of his face twitched; he muttered strange oaths to himself. A little beyond the camp he turned into a side-trail, and in a few minutes reached his cabin.

Four husky dogs leaped out to greet him as he approached. At sight of them he stopped suddenly and muttered:

"I could get me three hundred dollars for them, all right."

But remembering his vow, he beat his breast with his hands and again cried: "So help mine God!" and entered the cabin.

Lighting a candle he went to a box in the corner and picked out four large, dried salmon, one of which he gave to each of the hungry dogs. Then he staggered to his bunk, drew the robe over himself, and simultaneously fell into a deep sleep.

It was after twelve o'clock the following night before he awoke and remembered. Long he gazed into the darkness, murmuring to himself. Then he arose, kindled the fire, made and drank some coffee, piled all his grub into sacks, and lashed it to the big,

Yukon sled, slipped his gun and snow-shoes between the thongs, and before the camp awoke to life was well on his way to the wilderness.

If at any time during the year that followed the name of Ben Levi was mentioned, it was with the usual prophecy: "Oh, he'll be back one of these days with a fat poke; he always has."

Moralizing in the wilderness is a habit attended by a whole regiment of consequences. The survivors are those who keep a taut rein on their minds. If they have nothing to read or any duties to absorb the leisure hours of the long, winter nights, they will do wisely if they return to first principles by carving an image out of a piece of wood with a jack-knife, or keep the silence at bay by long sleeps at night and plenty of hard work through the day.

Ben Levi traveled for twelve straight hours without pausing to make camp or cook up. At the end of that time, being thoroughly exhausted, he made a hasty camp, fed the dogs, and curled up in his robe in the snow.

Day after day he held steadily up Kobuk River, trudging ahead of his team on snow-shoes. The latter, heads down, tongues hanging out, dug their paws in the snow, stretched their lank, gray bodies, and followed in the trail thus broken for them.

Everything went well with him as long as he had something to do; but in the lonely watches by his camp-fire he lived and relived again his last fierce battle with luck at the roulette-table in the Last Chance.

A month later found him at the headwaters of the river. As he was in an entirely unprospected region, he decided to winter there.

Building a small shack, he soon settled down to the ghastly routine that governs the life of a prospector during the winter months in the north.

He worked feverishly; but even so there came moments when he would pause in the middle of a blow with his pick, lean it against the wall of the shaft, and think—and think—raise his hands to heaven, tear his beard, and shriek:

"So help mine God!" in the teeth of the cynical silence.

In the middle of the night he would rise from his spruce-top bunk and pace the floor, clutch his breast with claw-like hand as if he would tear from his heart's secret depths the gnawing desire to gamble—to cross cards with chance—till, weak and worn, his long yellow teeth showing through his thick, parted lips, he would fall back on his bunk as the cold gray dawn of the new day filtered through the chinks in the wall.

His prospecting being unproductive in that vicinity, he crossed the divide to the headwaters of the Toklat before the snow left in the spring. The winter vigil had turned him gray, lending him the aspect of a lean, hungry wolf. He still had a little of his rough grub left, but subsisted chiefly on fresh meat, of which there was abundance in the country.

All that summer he prospected the creeks within a radius of many miles, moving camp often in the long summer days, inasmuch as one can then sleep out in the open. He had grown very silent, and scarcely ever spoke to the dogs. Every now and then, however, as the summer advanced, he would suddenly stop in his tracks, listen open-mouthed, a horrible look in his eyes, mutter to himself and walk on, peering furtively on either side.

At the keystone hour of night he would rise on his elbow and listen and gaze long into the dark corners of his cabin, a harrowed look on his face.

During these demonstrations the dogs would howl dismally, gaze at each other in a terrified fashion, and whimper and whine like frightened children. Ben never heeded them.

Fall found him on a creek a hundred miles lower down the Toklat from where he had crossed from the Kobuk. There he had thrown up a rude shack in which he was partially prepared to face the second winter.

He was washing a pan of gravel in the creek-bed one night, muttering to himself as usual, when he suddenly dropped it and screamed:

"Gold! Gold! At last I have struck it! Ha, ha! At last! O mine God in heaven, I thank Thee!"

He raised his outstretched arms and looked up at the sky.

"Ha, ha!" he chuckled mockingly to himself that night as he sewed up the contents of a little gold-sack. "Now have I got you! Ho, ho!"

He roared and laughed while the dogs outside wailed with a fear that stifled them.

Levi worked frantically until the freeze-up, every evening sewing up the residue from his rocker in a little gold sack, apostrophizing it meanwhile in a familiar manner.

There being nothing to do after the freeze-up took place—at least for a time—his demeanor underwent a gradual change. Half the night he would pace the cabin like a caged animal, pick up one of the sacks and weigh it in his hand, mutter ominously to himself, then beat his breast and cry, "So help mine God!"

Two men in a heavily laden poling-boat drew in to a slope on the right bank of the Toklat. The running ice made further progress impossible, so they decided to disembark, make camp, and reconnoiter. After piling all their grub on shore and hauling the boat up clear of the running ice, they pitched their tent and started in to cook up.

"Some one's been here ahead of us some time, Shorty," remarked Three-Fingered Bill. "I see a few little tree-stumps around."

"Blamed if I believe there's a creek left in this country that somebody hasn't been on," snorted Shorty as he

cut some thick steaks from a loin of moose. "Still we can't go any farther just now; so we might as well stick around here a while and take a look.

"If this creek looks all right in the morning we'll move our stuff up. If it doesn't, we can camp here till the ice gets firm, and go farther up the river. We can do a little hunting, too. I see plenty of moose-tracks around."

After breakfast the following morning the partners shouldered their guns and set off up the creek, which they had named Moose.

The air was clear and dry. A light snow that had fallen during the night clung to the trees, undisturbed by even the whisper of a wind. As the sun rose the coronas of snow on the tree-tops were bathed in rose of gold.

For many miles they saw no further sign of any one having been there, but about noon when they reached the forks of the creek they came upon a little clearing which gave evidence of some mining having been done by the shoveling-in process.

Somewhat surprised, they looked around and at last discovered a little cabin on the point between the forks of the creek. Toward this they made their way.

As they drew near a peal of diabolical laughter smote their ears.

"For the love of Mike! What's this, Shorty?" whispered Bill as they halted near the entrance. "Another nut, you think?"

In a few minutes the laugh was repeated.

"Ha, ha, ha! I beat you again," howled a voice.

The listeners shivered. They had heard the voices of many victims of the silence. Pushing aside the canvas that did duty for a door they entered.

This is what they saw by the light of a vacant window-place in the back of the cabin: Seated with crossed legs on the floor was the wild-looking form of a man in a ragged, worn-out fur coat. His face was covered with a long beard and his hair hung down

over his shoulders. Both beard and hair were as white as the new-fallen snow. On the soiled floor in front of him was a rudely constructed roulette-wheel. Innumerable little squat gold-pokes were piled around his knees and a similar but smaller pile was stacked on the opposite side of the table. He never looked up at their entrance, but kept on playing the game.

"How much you bet this time, Meester Devil; eh? How much you bet?"

"Ah-h! Two t'ousand? All right!"

"Yow! You vin! *Ach, Himmel!*"

"I get you yet! I get you yet! Bet more! Bet more!"

Reaching over, he piled all the gold-pokes belonging to his invisible adversary on one of the numbers and spun the little wooden ball.

With clenched hands and a diabolical leer on his face he watched it eagerly—awfully—as it bumped its way around the wheel and finally settled in one of the niches. Then:

"All mine! All—all!" he shrieked.

Stretching forth his arms he gathered all the little pokes under him with one sweep, breathed once, but that so deeply that at its conclusion his body was stretched to its limit, quivered slightly—and was still.

Shorty stepped forward and, kneeling, turned over the body and looked long at the emaciated features, then rose up with a scared look on his face.

"It's Ben Levi, Bill," he whispered hoarsely.

Bill stooped, picked up the body tremblingly, and placed it on the rude bunk.

"Say, Shorty! He's just a skinful of bones! I don't believe he weighs eighty pounds!"

"He must sure have struck it rich," gasped Shorty.

Bill picked up one of the sacks. As he balanced it in his hand a moment a puzzled expression gradually crept into his face. He whipped out his hunting-knife, ripped the poke open, and disclosed—a handful of common creek-sand!

The Blindness of Justice



by
Tom S. Elrod

THE Governor pulled open the bottom drawer of his desk, removed a quart bottle of whisky, and took a long drink. He jammed back the cork with the palm of his hand and replaced the bottle, while his tongue sought the drops that clung to his mustache. It was not the first time the bottle had made the trip from the

drawer to his lips and back again during the day.

As a result he was somewhat befuddled. He was not intoxicated; no one could have sworn in a court of law that he was drunk. But at the same time he was not in a condition to give any matter that calm, dispassionate consideration which the chief execu-

tive of a State is supposed to give to the commonwealth's weighty problems.

However, the Governor did not want to give the problem at hand any consideration, weighty or otherwise. He wanted to forget it—to drive it entirely from his mind. That was the reason why the bottle had come out so many times and also the reason why it was so nearly empty.

In the corridor that led to the Governor's office an old and shabbily dressed woman was holding to the wall for support, weeping as only a heart-broken mother weeps. She had just made her last ineffectual appeal for the boy who was to go to the electric chair that day and give his life to the State, that the law might be vindicated and the standards of society upheld.

And the Governor was shaken—so shaken in fact that he had sought again to drive from his mind the memory of the old woman's face and the sound of her sobs.

Creeping into his consciousness at intervals was a vision of the youth being led from the death-house to the chair. The chaplain was reading a prayer. The youth's face was chalky white; his knees were trembling so that two guards must support him. The Governor had never seen any one go to his death that way, but he had read the details and had visited the prison. He knew every step of the way.

Now they were strapping him in the chair. The hood had been adjusted. Pitifully the youth had tried to mumble a prayer, but his ashen lips only shook and the words would not come.

The warden was raising his hand—

There was a blinding crash, as if the Governor were in hell and a million devils were fighting for a chance to tear out his nerves while he still quivered between life and death. Then finally came peace.

For the Governor had fainted and was lying with his head lolling over an arm sprawled across the desk in front of him. He must have lain that way

for several minutes when consciousness finally returned. He shuddered, groped at the arms of his chair for support, and ground his teeth in an effort to become master of himself again. Then his hand flew to his watch. He noted the hour just as he noted it scores of times during the passing day.

"No; they haven't done it yet," he said to himself. "Not yet. He's still alive; but Heaven, think how he must suffer! Three hours more and he'll pay the penalty."

Joe Blossom was just an ordinary kind of a youth. His age, as it happened, was a little past twenty-two. One might have found his counterpart in Seattle or New York, Chicago or New Orleans, Minneapolis or Memphis.

There was nothing inherently bad in him, but there was something inherently weak. He was one of those boys who become attached to a tough gang because they will fetch and carry; because they will do what they are told and be proud of having rendered even such a small service for their leader.

And it is often the case that these weaker brothers become what the gang calls "the goat," while those whose intellects are keener escape when the strong arm of the law reaches out and tries to grasp them. Also they are more likely to fall into the clutches of the law when the newspapers, vying with each other to see which can carry the biggest "crime-wave" story, demand that the police clean up the city and give decent, hard-working folk a chance to walk the streets without fear of life and property.

Joe's father had died when he was little. What followed was the old familiar story of the mother who works when she can find work; who works because she needs must do so to provide even the semblance of food and clothing for herself and little one. By day Joe existed with a neighboring

family. When he was big enough to toddle around a little he toddled into the street, where he seemed to find his proper sphere.

School had no attraction for him as he grew older, but in some unaccountable way he learned to read; and when his papers were sold he pored over the lurid literature that told of brave deeds and strange adventures.

One trouble with Joe was his inability to tell the difference between famous and infamous. All he knew was that he longed to be like those men of whom he read, those men whose trusty sixshooters leap from their belts and pour a rain of fire until scores of enemies bite the dust—providing there was any dust in the immediate neighborhood for purposes of mastication.

Lately he had been watching the heroes of the movies. They inspired him more than ever. He had been a slow reader and many of the larger words remained as Greek to him, but before an unfolding film one could see for oneself. So he became inspired.

When the opportunity presented itself to do a small service for the Boo Gang he hastily did as he was told, his narrow chest swelling with pride. For had not Pete the Pirate grunted approval? And was not Pete the Pirate leader of the Boo Gang? Moreover, Joe was allowed to loaf with the gang now and then, and his periods of usefulness to the leader and the lieutenants were becoming more frequent.

Then one night a "harness bull" was to be "croaked." In other words, the gang intended to kill a uniformed policeman, simply because that officer was in the way. Their plans were well laid. The men who were to do the work would shoot from a window, and as they were to use smokeless powder and silencers, there was but little chance of detection.

When the officer passed into the light cast by a corner lamp they were to fire and escape. It was a cinch.

Joe knew of the gang's plans. He

would have been proud if he had been chosen to fire the shot. But he was never trusted with anything so important. The only instructions he had relative to the job were to "keep yer head shut an' beat it."

Being a gangster, Joe thought he had to carry a weapon. So from a pawn-shop he had purchased a revolver. Others in the gang had their weapons equipped with silencers; Joe equipped his likewise. The others used smokeless cartridges; Joe also bought a small supply.

Joe still lived with his mother in a squalid tenement. He had grown accustomed to allowing her to make the living not only for herself but for him as well. Members of the gang were not in their usual haunts, he found after a tour of inspection, so back home he went. He slouched into the tiny back yard, where he saw a discarded tomato-can lying against the brick wall. Old Sallie Kemper stepped to her back window on the third floor and emptied a pan of dish-water. Joe ducked and cursed as some of the greasy water splattered him. Sallie laughed and said she was sorry he did not get all of it.

"Little good he is to his mother or any one else," she declared. Then she returned to the window for another look at him.

Just then Joe addressed a cutting remark to the tomato-can. To him it represented a policeman in full uniform. The officer was then entering the light cast by the corner lamp.

"Ye fat-necked bull! Ye *will* get in the gang's way, will ye?" he demanded.

Out came his revolver. He aimed quickly and Sallie Kemper heard a slight *chug*. The tomato-can rattled against the wall. Through the gathering dusk she saw a newly made hole in its side.

"He'll kill somebody yet with that noiseless popgun o' his," she remarked to herself, and returned to her household duties.

That night Finny the Fish and Baldy Newton waited until Schwartz took his wife from the second floor of the corner tenement to the beer-garden. They went every night and would not be back for an hour. So the two members of Pete's gang made their way to the Schwartz rooms, pulled down the window-shade, and placed their weapons on the ledge.

Mark Ferris, the policeman they were to kill, was due almost any time now. Neither of the gangsters exchanged a word. According to the arrangements Finny the Fish was to shoot first because he was the better marksman. If he missed Baldy would open fire.

Out of the shadows Ferris was coming. He entered the zone of light cast by the corner lamp. There was a slight *chug* from Schwartz's window, and Ferris fell, shot through the head.

Finny and Baldy softly made their way through the rear of the tenement, climbed the area-wall, dropped to the alley, and in five minutes were far enough away to begin breathing more easily. When the coast was clear they raised the manhole of a sewer and dropped both revolvers into the opening.

Meanwhile a man not more than half a block away had seen the officer fall and had run to his assistance. Ferris was dead when the man reached him. The man began to shout. In an incredibly short time the street was swarming with policemen, detectives, and the usual crowd of curiosity-seekers.

"It's the Boo Gang," declared Detective Hendricks. "I heard they were carryin' silencers an' nobody heard this shot. One of 'em done it, because they had it in for Ferris. He's been tryin' to break 'em up."

A police captain gave an order to round up every member of the gang. Officers started in all directions. One of the first ran across Joe, who was slinking on the outskirts of the crowd. In a twinkling the policeman had the

youth's hands pointing skyward while he "frisked" the gangster for a weapon. Out of Joe's hip-pocket came the revolver, fitted with a silencer and loaded with smokeless cartridges.

The policeman broke the gun and looked at the chamber. Two of the shells had been fired.

"Honest, I never done it," Joe whined. "I kin explain where them shots was fired. Honest, I never croaked nobody."

Joe was bundled into a patrol-wagon. Fifteen minutes later he was facing a rapid fire of questions. Was he not a member of the Boo Gang? Why was he carrying a weapon? Where had he fired the two shots?

Haltingly Joe explained that he had fired once at a tomato-can and again at a dog that bothered him. Suddenly his drawn face brightened and he offered to take the police with him and show them the can. Knowing they would have to pay a visit to his home anyway, two detectives slipped the nippers on his wrists and rushed him in a department automobile to the tenement where he lived.

His mother threw his arms around his neck and began to weep. A detective pushed her to one side and directed Joe to go ahead. The boy led the officers to the back yard and pointed to the can. Inside, where it had flattened against the brick wall, was a bullet.

Sallie Kemper looked through her window, saw that something was happening, and hurried down three flights of stairs. At the door she stood with her arms akimbo, panting a little.

"He's tellin' the truth, officers," she declared. "I seen him do it. I was jist throwin' out some dish-water an' some of it fell on him. An' when I looked out again he was pointin' his gun at somethin' and he says: 'Ye fat-necked bull! Ye will git in the gang's way, will ye?' An' jist then I hears a little chuggin' noise an' the rattle o' the tomato-can, an' that's the can."

The eyebrows of the two detectives

went up. Rapidly the case outlined itself before them. To be sure it was circumstantial evidence, but it was plain enough. And Policeman Ferris had worn a No. 17½ collar.

So back Joe went to a cell with a charge of murder lodged against him. He pleaded not guilty, while the newspapers howled about the crime-wave and demanded that the police rid the city of gunmen and gangsters.

Joe was convicted before the case began. The twelve men who sat in the jury-box looked past the faded old mother and saw in him a type of youth who does not hesitate to do anything of a criminal nature. Each had answered questions to the effect that he could give the defendant a fair and impartial trial, but most of the twelve were already prejudiced. The State's attorney dwelt upon the hardened look on Joe's face. A closer observer might have said the face was merely weak.

The evidence showed that Policeman Ferris had been shot by some one who used a weapon equipped with a silencer and loaded with smokeless-powder cartridges. Joe carried such a weapon, and it was loaded with that kind of cartridges. Joe was a member of the Boo Gang, and the gang had sworn to get the officer. Sallie Kemper told the jury what she had heard the defendant say before he fired at a tomato-can. That accounted for one bullet. The other, the prosecution contended, had killed Ferris.

Some of the jurors smiled openly when Joe took the stand and testified that he had fired at a dog. On cross-examination he became tangled and was not certain whether the dog was on one street or another. His own lawyer thought he was guilty.

There was no money to prosecute an appeal when the court sentenced him to death in the electric chair. There was but little sympathy, because feature-writers, playing up the case in the newspapers, in the main had doomed him from the first.

The police had avenged the death of

one of their number and had put fear into the hearts of the gangsters. Joe went to the death-house and was forgotten by all save the newspapermen who jotted down the date of his execution, by the Governor who did not believe in capital punishment, and by his mother. And as the lawyer, pocketing the fee she had worked so hard to earn for him, had told her that nothing could save her boy now except the Governor's reprieve, she began a systematic effort to persuade that official to prevent the execution.

It required all the money the mother could earn in a week to take her to the capital of the State, so she went back to scrubbing floors, starving herself on one meal a day and hoarding the scant earnings to spend in her boy's behalf. Four times she had made the trip to the Governor's office, and four times had been refused admittance. And now Joe had only a month to live.

From an anonymous source came the money to pay for a trip to the State prison. There the mother saw her boy in the death-house. Joe had aged; there was a serious air about him. Though she had always believed in his innocence, she was stronger in that belief than ever when she came away.

The next week she was back at the State house again, begging a chance to speak to the Governor; but again permission was refused. Then she bided her time, and when the outer office was empty for a moment she rushed to the door, opened it, and fell sobbing at the Governor's knees.

He started to push her away; but her battered black bonnet fell to the floor, her shrunken shoulders heaved, and he found the hand he had raised to push her from him straying to her silvered hair. He touched the head lightly; then assisted her to a chair.

"It's about Joe," she sobbed. "Oh, Mr. Governor, Joe ain't guilty! Joe never killed anybody. Joe wouldn't 'a' killed anybody if they'd asked him to. He's my boy, Mr. Governor, an' I know."

"Maybe he was a little wild and harum-scarum; but there wasn't anything really bad in Joe. He got into bad company an' packed a gun. Then they fixed it on him.

"Before God, your honor, Joe's innocent. You ain't going to let them take him to the chair. Are you? Oh, please, Mr. Governor, think what it would mean if it was your boy! Think how your mother would feel if it was you!"

And she fell to weeping again.

The Governor promised to look into the case, and finally persuaded the broken woman to leave him. He did send for the report of the case and scanned it closely.

"Humph!" he said. "Clear case of circumstantial evidence and no defense. Looks pretty bad for the boy, but a good lawyer and one who was honestly trying to defend could have brought out a lot of things there that his lawyer overlooked.

"The law says every defendant is presumed to be innocent until he is proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Well, I guess the jury did not have a reasonable doubt about Joe. He's had a fair jury trial, and never even took an appeal. I can't see where I am expected to come in and exercise my right."

He placed the papers before him and looked through the window. Then he shook himself and walked hastily across the room. He was beginning to see the boy led to the electric chair.

"My Heaven! That's horrible!" he exclaimed. "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; a life for a life! What's to be gained by that? Isn't the man who throws the switch as much a murderer as the man who committed the original homicide? But that's the law, and the law must be upheld."

By and by the Governor sent word to Joe's mother that he could not interfere. He expressed the greatest sorrow for her and for Joe, but he declared that there had been a fair trial

and that Joe must pay the penalty. He told her not to try to see him again, because it would not do a particle of good. His mind was made up.

During the days that followed came the haunting visions of Joe in the death-cell; of Joe on the way to the chair; of Joe being strapped, ready for the current to be applied. The Governor suffered the tortures of the damned. By day the scene was with him; at night he dreamed horrible dreams, in which at times he was the victim and was led, shrieking and protesting his innocence, only to be bound and gagged to stop his struggles and cries.

A week before the day set for the execution he had begun to drink. It was an old habit which he thought he had mastered. In fact, he had sworn that during his term of office he would take only an occasional drink with a friend. However, he had to have something to deaden his senses. He could not go on seeing Joe before him, awake or asleep.

Finally, as a last resort, Joe's mother began a search for Pete the Pirate. At length she found him in the back room of a saloon where husky-voiced men hushed at her approach because they knew her as the victim's mother.

With an oath on his lips Pete started for a rear door, but it was locked, and he had to turn and face her. His face had gone white; and his lips were twitching. As with the Governor, she fell at his knees, clasping him and begging him to save her boy.

Again her bonnet fell. As Pete sank back into a chair the sight of that old white head, shaking there below him, brought back the memory of his own mother, whom he had not seen in years. He had run away from her ten years ago, and when he first started to go wrong, when he came home drinking or had been in trouble she had clasped his knees in the same way and had prayed for him.

There was a mist in Pete's eyes. He struggled to free his legs.

"You know Joe ain't guilty," the woman kept saying over and over. "You know Joe never shot the policeman. Joe liked you an' follered you, an' he'd do anything you told him to; but you know Joey—my Joey—never killed anybody; don't you, Pete?"

"Won't you tell me what I can do to save him? He's only got a few days more now. Won't you take pity on his old mother an' do something?"

Pete wrenched himself loose and dashed out of the saloon. In his own hang-out, with the door barred, he did something that would have queered him with the gang. He broke down and cried, his body shaking by sobs and his breath whistling through his clenched teeth. And through the mumbings that came at intervals a listener might have heard over and over the one word, "Mother!"

The day that was to be Joe's last on earth dawned chill and raw. The Governor was haggard and worn from loss of sleep and from the effects of the liquor he had consumed in an effort to forget the fact that he might reach forth his hand and save a human life, if he chose to do so.

In spite of his warnings to Joe's mother that he would not see her again, she had come back, for the Governor was positively her last hope. She used the strategy of mother-love to gain entrance to his office.

There had been a scene that had shaken the Governor still more; but he refused to interfere. Then out into darkness—into a world where for her the sun would never shine again the woman had staggered, while the Governor sought solace in the bottle that reposed in the bottom drawer.

Again he looked at his watch and computed the time. It was less than three hours now; he could still save Joe.

The newspapers had commended him for his firmness. Editorially they had declared themselves to be glad that there was at last a man in the State house who could say "No" to maud-

lin sympathy and allow justice to be done.

The Governor had ambitions. There was the United States Senate ahead of him. He could not afford to make a mistake now. He must be known as a man of iron.

The door opened and Henry Henderson came in. He was the boss of the party that had elected the Governor to office, and when he gave orders the Governor executed them, generally without question.

"Saw an old woman cryin' out there," Henderson remarked by way of greeting. "Guess you must 'a' been havin' some swell, elegant party in here. Buck up, Jim! You ain't worryin' about Blossom. Are you?"

The Governor lied.

"No; I determined long ago that the law must take its course in his case. Naturally it's unpleasant to have his mother hanging around here, but he's guilty, and he'll have to die!"

"And besides, he ain't got any influence I ever heard of," supplemented the practical Henderson.

Henderson had not come to talk about Joe Blossom. He had a deal on; and while he knew exactly how to put it through he wanted the Governor to polish off the rough spots here and there. People were getting so they kicked considerably about this rough stuff, and nowadays a deal had to be made squint-proof before it was sprung.

Their heads were together when the door opened again. The Governor swung around to face his messenger.

"A tough-looking fellow left this envelope for you, and said it was very urgent," the messenger explained, handing the Governor a communication.

He started to tear it open when Henderson interfered.

"Say," the boss demanded, "whose business is being transacted now—the State's or mine? You listen to me."

The Governor's brain was clouded. He tossed the envelope, unopened, to

a corner of his desk while Henderson continued the outline of his scheme.

But the Governor seemed unable to make the suggestions he usually made. He fingered his watch-chain and constantly looked at his watch. Henderson asked him a question, and found he was not listening.

"Darned if I don't believe you're drunk!" Henderson exploded. "I come in here and try to talk business to you, and you don't even know what I'm sayin'."

In spite of the Governor's hasty apology and his attempts to mollify his chief, the latter clapped on his hat and strode out of the office.

As he staggered back to his desk the Governor's eye fell on the envelope. He ripped it open and saw the misspelled word—

CONFESION

at the top. His eye raced to the bottom and read the signature—

PETER FRAVEL,

beter noen as Pete the Pirate.

He rushed to the telephone and shouted to long distance to get the State prison immediately.

As he stood by the phone he read:

Finney the fish and baldy newton
croaked ferris. joe blossom never had

nothing to do with it. i wouldn't of told this if it hadnt of been for his mother. she broke me all up. i am on my way to headquarters now to give myself up. Finney and baldy will be at tony's place tonite. the bulls can find them theare.

The Governor was trembling visibly. Perspiration poured down his face.

He jumped to the telephone again, swore at the operator and demanded the prison immediately. There had been a little delay, the operator told him. The connection would be made in a moment.

"Telegram for you, Governor," said the messenger as he entered the door and handed over a yellow envelope.

His excellency opened it with fingers which shook so that he could scarcely make them do his bidding.

Execution entire success. Blossom dead in minute after first shock applied. Thought Blossom would confess, but he refused.

The warden's name was appended. The Governor dragged himself to the telephone.

"Here's your party," came the voice of the operator.

"Cancel the call," he replied. "I've decided not to talk."

THE LANE IN AUTUMN

By Lurana Sheldon

THE sunlit road has merged into a lane .
Where velvet leaves invite my eager feet;
But awkward branches now my vision greet,
Yet their gaunt shadows toward each other strain,
Glad to embrace, so long their love was vain.
I hear no bird song, see no verdant blade,
But on each side the ripened nuts are brown,
And from the thistle hangs the tasseled down
With satin luster richly overlaid.
The vines lie heavily, a tangled chain,
Along the wall, and now above my head
The azure sky with paling sheen seems spread
To hold the lane in subtle, mystic thrall,
With autumn's silence brooding over all.

The Log-Book

By the Editor

CAN you conceive of a person knowing nothing about the great war in Europe? What would be your sentiments if you should chance to meet such an individual and, in the course of conversation, he should drop a remark proving he had no idea what you meant when you spoke of the Allies, Petrograd, or Ypres?

Next month I am going to give you a book-length novel that involves, among its other highly dramatic features, just this situation. The hero, who tells his own story, is in absolute ignorance of what has taken place in the world since—well, not since he has been in jail, for he isn't a criminal. Nor is he a man who has just arrived from a long sea voyage in the arctic regions. I'll keep you guessing for a month as to the why of his peculiar condition, only telling you meantime that

TOO TERRIBLE FOR WAR

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS

Author of "The Hoodoo Ranch," etc.

is one of the most unique and deeply absorbing stories that has ever appeared in THE ARGOSY. Moreover, it is up to the minute, was written since Italy's entrance into the conflict, and I am side-tracking another novel I had booked for October in order that I may give you readers the chance to get this thrilling tale hot off the bat.

Mr. Hopkins has been a great favorite with you in the past. You have had nothing from him in over two years, but now he has come back with the best tale he has ever written, and one which I am sure will rivet your attention to every word in its twenty-six chapters. Don't forget that you'll get "Too Terrible for War" complete in the October ARGOSY, ready on all news-stands, Wednesday, September 15. Tell your friends about it too.

Another big feature of this October number will be the first instalment of a three-part story,

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

BY FRED JACKSON

You want to pay particular attention to this story. It is not only one of very dramatic plot, but possesses a unique interest from the fact that it is probably the very last story by Mr. Jackson that will ever appear in THE ARGOSY.

Oh, no, we haven't quarreled with the gentleman. Nothing of the sort. Only yesterday he called on me in my sanctum where we had a very pleasant chat on the new prosperity that has come his way and will doubtless keep

Missing Page

Pages 445 thru 448

Missing Page

Pages 445 thru 448

Let radiators prolong summer

You can keep summer's warmth through chilly autumn and frigid winter by radiator heating. A kindling-fire takes the chill off all rooms alike on those early raw or rainy fall days. And a little larger coal-fire produces evenly distributed heat which baffles the piercing winds of blizzards. Every nook and corner of the home is made cozy, and guests will marvel at the soft, genial temperature produced by



AMERICAN & IDEAL RADIATORS & BOILERS

IDEAL Boiler and AMERICAN Radiators?

These outfits are no longer considered "luxuries" because in thousands of instances annually they are proving an economy for any building, small or large. They require no more care-taking than to run a stove for one room.



A No. 42-W IDEAL Boiler in 1422 ft. x 138 in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$190, were used to heat this cottage. At this price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which vary according to climatic and other conditions.

IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators bring no ashes, dust or coal-gases into the living rooms. They are noiseless, absolutely safe (a child can run them), and will outlast your building. Did you ever hear of any one going back to old-fashioned heating once they tried the radiator way? Any argument in that for you?

If you want to make your home a haven of comfort, don't wait until you build but equip your present house with one of these comfort-giving outfits. Phone your dealer today for an estimate—it will surprise you how well within reach is the price. And now before the "busy season" sets in you can get the services of the best fitters. Iron prices now rule the lowest in a decade.

Whether you live in city or country, write us today for free book, "Ideal Heating"—full of big facts you ought to know.

Before the first drear, drafty days again show how cheerless and costly your present heating method is, why not safeguard your home forever with an



\$150 permanent Cleaner

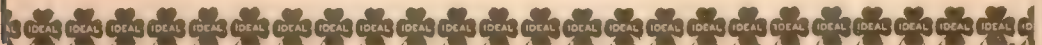
Ask for catalog of ARCO WAND Vacuum Cleaner. First genuinely practical Cleaner on market; is connected by iron suction pipe to all floors; and will last as long as your building.



Showrooms and warehouses in all large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write Department A 34
816-822 S. Michigan
Avenue, Chicago



THE SPORT ALLURING

With a Few Suggestions as to How to Select and Use the Implements Necessary to the Enjoyment of One of the Most Attractive Outdoor Recreations.



O the gun fan, it seems incredible that there might be a man who doesn't own a gun, but it is a sad commentary that brings to light the fact that only about four million men in the United States owned guns last year—by guns we of course mean shotguns—and of these three and one-half millions took out licenses to shoot during 1914.

Few sports offer the rugged recreation enjoyed by the wild fowl and upland game hunter, while to the man or woman who cares not for the trips, and climbs and enjoyable hardships of the live bird and game shooter, the delightful pastime of trap shooting brings us back to the "sport alluring." Some have been kept from indulging in inanimate pigeon shooting through the impression that its cost was prohibitive. Nothing could be further from the fact. For although it is more expensive than tiddle-de-winks, it is less expensive in proportion to the pleasure, health, and charm found in it.

A single barrel shotgun can be purchased as low as \$6.00, and although I should not recommend so cheap a gun, it would in a pinch—do to begin with. At from \$17 to \$25 a good gun may be had, while of course from the latter price up to a thousand dollars, the most finicky can be fitted. Gun clubs generally charge only nominal dues, for which they furnish trap boys and pullers. Targets cost a cent each at these clubs, while shells will cost about 65c. per box of 25. The tyro should limit himself to twenty-five targets an afternoon, thus allowing a Saturday afternoon's recreation at a cost of about \$1.00.

One of the most important features of trap shooting is the fact that it is an "all-year-round" sport. When the snow and ice make it more enjoyable indoors for the golfer, when the ball fan has to take his exercise through reading of the doings of the Giants at Marlin, Texas, and the tennis player uses his time planning improvements of the courts for next season, the clay target smasher stands outside his warm clubhouse

and shoots away to his heart's content, no weather being too severe for the "sport alluring." For the man or woman not within reaching distance of a gun club or who wants to shoot on days not scheduled for club shoots, the recently introduced hand trap brings the club to him or her. This little device eliminates the necessity for a trap boy or puller! Anyone can operate the hand trap, and incidentally it will give the "upper register" shooter some targets that will make him stand up and take aim. It throws either an extremely difficult target or an easy one, such as Mr. Beginner would like.

The cost of the thing is negligible and it fits in a suitcase.

Trap shooting has become exceedingly popular among women, there now being a dozen clubs comprised entirely of the fair sex. The 16 and 20 gauge are somewhat more suitable for women because of less weight and lighter charge; however, a number of the best women shooters stick to the 12-gauge.

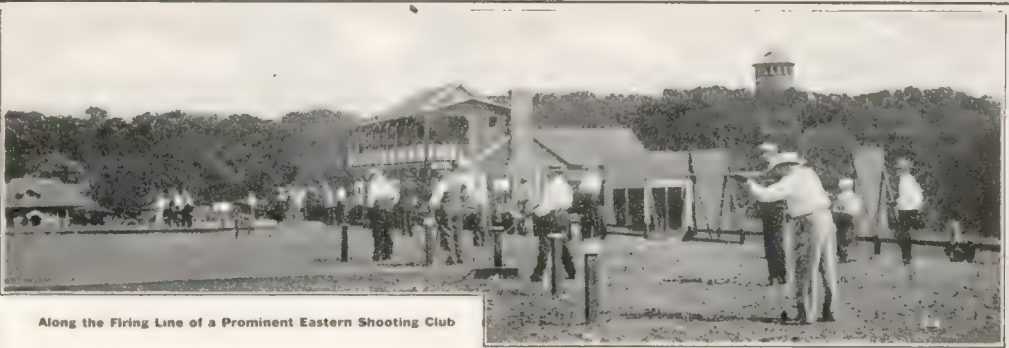
Few sports are as scientific as trap shooting. The rapid calculation of lead, elevation, angle, time, etc., the instant action and nice decision, quicken the eye and hand and develop qualities helpful in every-day business life. For the brain worker, trap shooting offers relaxation and relief from brain fag because it requires intense concentration on an enjoyable occupation, minus physical exhaustion.

Trap shooting soon will be the leading outdoor recreation, so if you do not belong to a gun club, join one now. If there is no club in your locality, start one.

The following pointers will help you to select a gun and become easily proficient in scatter gun shooting.

CHOOSING A GUN.

The first step is the choice of a gun—not so much its make, but its fitness for the work it will have to do. Clay targets are small objects to aim at, and unlike game birds and animals, have no wing bones or



Along the Firing Line of a Prominent Eastern Shooting Club

Learn How to Shoot

There's no sport in the world more alluring than trapshooting. It represents vigor—vim—recreation—and pleasure—to thousands of men and women. It is the one sport that knows no "game" laws—no season limitations.

Learn how to handle a gun. If you haven't got one—get one. Go out to the gun club. Take a "crack at the clays." Then you'll realize the fascination of this truly American sport. Or, if you prefer individual practice, get a



Hand Trap

THE PORTABLE GUN CLUB



Hand Trap Ready for
Shooter's Call

The Du Pont Hand Trap is a simple, practical, efficient and easily operated device for throwing clay pigeons; great for both novice and expert. It will throw all kinds of "birds" from easy, short distance flyers up to amazingly difficult shots. It is an ideal equipment for home, country, camp or vacation use. It takes up but little space in the ordinary suit case and makes trapshooting possible anywhere and at any time.

Send for these Free Booklets

Mention THE ARGOSY, and get the name of your nearest gun club and its secretary:

THE SPORT ALLURING

Gives in picture and story many valuable and instructive trapshooting tips for men. It's worth reading.

DIANA OF THE TRAPS

Gives the experiences of many women who have found health, recreation and renewed nerve energy at the traps.

DU PONT POWDER COMPANY, Wilmington, Delaware

legs to break and put them out of commission. A clay target must be hit *solidly*, and with several pellets of shot, if it is to be counted on the score sheet. In the field a wounded bird or animal can often be retrieved and put in the game sack after having been only lightly hit; but a clay target, even when "dusted" heavily, cannot be retrieved and counted on the score sheet. Hence a close-shooting gun, one *full choke*, is a necessity if ultimate success at the traps is desired. A 12-gauge gun, weighing $7\frac{1}{2}$ or $7\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, is the right thing for trap work. Guns of lighter weight give too heavy a recoil even with the average load of three drams of a "bulk" powder or 24 grains of a "dense" powder and $1\frac{1}{8}$ ounces of chilled shot. Nothing puts a man to the bad when trap shooting so quickly and so completely as heavy recoil (or "kick").

Select, therefore, for trap work a 12-gauge gun, about $7\frac{3}{4}$ pounds in weight, and either a single-shot, a repeater or a double-barrel, for all these guns have their firm adherents, and no one style seems to be much more preferable than another, except, of course, that doubles cannot be shot with a single-shot gun.

When selecting a gun be sure that it has what is known as a "straight" stock; that is, one that has not too much "drop" to it.

The *thickness* of the stock is another matter to be considered. As a general proposition it may be said that a thin-faced man does not require as thin a stock, that is, thin at the comb, as one who has plump cheeks; in other words, a man who has a thin face would probably shoot better with a thick, well-rounded comb than he would if the stock were thin, or wedge-shaped at the comb. He would also be much less likely to have his cheek punished by the recoil. The idea is, of course, that when a man puts his gun to his shoulder, drops his cheek against the stock and looks along the barrel, he should find that *he is looking straight down the rib to the sight*. If he is not doing so, then he is liable to "cross shoot" at any time, and his gun cannot be said to fit him, and the stock must be altered to suit.

The *length* of the stock is very important when selecting a gun. This length depends upon the length of the gunner's arm, and naturally a long-armed man would need, and should have, a longer stock than a short-armed man. The *length of the stock* is measured from the front trigger in a straight line to the center of the butt.

A fairly accurate way of finding out whether your gunstock fits you is to place the gun to your shoulder and put your finger *naturally* on the trigger as if about to pull it. Keeping your finger on the trigger, take the gun from your shoulder and let the butt rest in the hollow of your arm, the muzzle pointing upward. If no readjustment of the position of the finger on the trigger, or of the hand on the grip are required, your gunstock fits you, so far as its length is concerned.

The *trigger pull* is important. Pull is the term applied to the weight in pounds avoirdupois which, if attached to the trigger when the gun is cocked and held perpendicularly, would cause the trigger to be pulled and the hammer to fall. As a general rule a pull of from 4 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds may be considered satisfactory and can be recommended.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the main essentials to be observed in selecting a gun for trap shooting are *close shooting qualities, weight, drop, thickness of stock, length and trigger pull*. All these really depend on the individuality of the person selecting the gun; in other words, the gun must fit the shooter, or he cannot expect to do much more than fair work, no matter how hard he may practice. An ill-fitting coat is not only awkward to wear, but hampers the movements of the wearer, and an ill-fitting gun is just as awkward to handle and won't "point right" in the hands of a novice. An expert can do fair work with a gun that does not fit him, simply because he knows how to shoot targets, and soon learns how to hold the gun, whether under or over the targets; but a beginner would be hopelessly at sea under similar conditions.

An excellent plan for a beginner to adopt with reference to getting a gun to suit him, is to try any gun about the right length of stock (this based, as stated before, on his length of arm) that his friends will loan him temporarily for such trial. Sooner or later he will find one with which he can do better than will others, and thus has a basis to go on. Sometimes a beginner picks one up that happens to be just right, and the trick is more than half turned.

Another pointer for the beginner to remember is to have no hesitation in asking the advice of an expert, particularly one of the expert professionals, for the latter are always expected and indeed are glad to give advice on just such points, and any suggestions they may have to offer will be found as a rule to be of much benefit.



"Citizenry, Trained and Accustomed to Arms"

—PRESIDENT WILSON

Get accustomed to gun powder. Learn to shoot straight. That's at least 50% of a soldier's equipment.

Perhaps the training will stand you in stead in some moment of personal danger. The lives of your wife and children may sometime depend on your steadiness and courage. The best weapon to practice with is the

IVER JOHNSON

SAFETY AUTOMATIC REVOLVER

It is absolutely safe. It is accurate and reliable. It is simple in operation and will not fail you in a pinch. There are no levers to adjust or forget. Its safety is automatic—part of the action. All you have to remember is to pull the trigger.

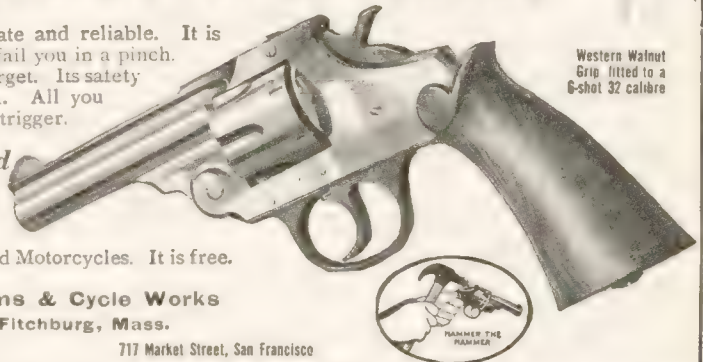
Costs \$6 at Hardware and Sporting Goods Stores

Send for an 84-page book on Revolvers, Shot Guns, Bicycles and Motorcycles. It is free.

Iver Johnson's Arms & Cycle Works
140 River Street, Fitchburg, Mass.

99 Chambers Street New York

717 Market Street, San Francisco



Western Walnut
Grip fitted to a
6-shot 32 calibre



WURLITZER
60 years of instrument making
Carrying Case Free
with this superb
triple silver plated
Lyric Cornet.

10 Cents a Day

Pays for This Cornet An astounding offer! Only 10¢ a day buys this superb Triple Silver Plated Lyric Cornet. **FREE TRIAL** before you decide to buy. Write for our big 250 page Free Band Catalog.

Rock-bottom, direct-from-the-manufacturer's prices on all kinds of instruments. Pay for them at the rate of only a few cents a day. Generous allowance for old instruments. Free Trial. We supply the U.S. Gov't. Write now. **THE RUDOLPH WURLITZER CO., Dept. 1076,** 4th St., Cincinnati, Ohio. S. Wabash Ave., Chicago.

AMAZING BARGAIN!



Genuine Standard Visible Oliver Typewriter—latest Model 5, back spacer, tabulator, color writing. Nothing lacking—metal case. **FREE TRIAL—No Advance Payment!** Send a little bit each week until our cash price is paid. No red tape. Send for our amazing Bargain Offer and FREE Typewriter Book today. No obligation.

TYPEWRITER DISTRIBUTING SYNDICATE
1610-62 F Wabash Avenue, Chicago

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

20% DOWN 10% MONTHLY



Let us send you any Diamond you may select from our catalogue so you may compare our values with those offered by other dealers; be convinced that our **Importers' Prices** offer you a great saving. We furnish a guarantee certificate with every Diamond and allow the full purchase price on all exchanges. We will send express prepaid any Diamond or other article, for examination and approval, you to be the sole judge as to whether you keep it or return it at our expense. Write today for our Free catalogue de luxe No. 21, and see how easy it is for you to own and wear a beautiful Diamond. **L. W. SWEET & CO., Inc.,** 2 and 4 Maiden Lane, NEW YORK CITY



Any *good* field shot should with but little practice make a first-class trap shot. The thing that bothers him at first is the idea of holding the gun right up or close to the shoulder when calling "Pull." It is unnatural to him, and at first probably strikes him as unsportsmanlike. He tries the up-to-the-shoulder game and finding it a new and strained position to him, fails miserably instead of "breaking them all," which he had expected to find a simple operation, as it looks so easy. He then reverts to the gun-below-the-elbow (field style), and the targets get away from him so fast he has to hurry up to catch them, which he does not do in a very large percentage of instances. Unless such a man has grit and determination to find out how it is done he quits right there, and a good man is lost to the sport of trap shooting.

The field shot will find another thing, too, and that is that an exact duplicate of his old favorite in the field will not be just what he wants. If he is a good quail (Virginia partridge) shot, ten to one he uses a fairly straight stock. That will be O. K. as a guide for his trap gun; but he can use a longer stock on his trap gun to good advantage and should bear this in mind when ordering his gun. It will benefit him in assisting to take up the recoil, and as he can adjust his gun before calling "Pull," it will not catch under his arm and bother him, as it would if he were shooting in the gun-below-the-elbow or field style.

AMMUNITION.

This subject can be dismissed in but a few words. The scores made by experts show conclusively the class of article now being put on the market by all the standard loading companies. The shells manufactured by any and all of these companies, and loaded with one or other of the brands of smokeless shotgun powder are good enough to tie to under any conditions of wind or weather.

The novice, *i. e.*, the beginner, should guard against using too heavy a load. Heavy loads cause correspondingly heavy recoil, and recoil not only causes sore shoulders, but frequently severe headaches, and consequent gun shyness on the part of the beginner. Select and stick to, for the first few months at least, a load of three drams of a "bulk" powder, or 24 grains of a "dense" powder, with either an ounce and an eighth or an ounce and a quarter of shot. The ounce and an eighth load is fast and

snappy, and is extremely pleasant to shoot. When ordering your trap loads, be sure and specify "*chilled*" shot, for if you use soft shot you will find you lose from 30 to 50 per cent of your pattern.

SHOOT WITH BOTH EYES OPEN.

Use both eyes; you need them both, and sometimes you will wish you had a third—the clay targets *will* steal out and get away from you somehow.

"Keep both eyes open" is a rule that must be adhered to, if success is to attend your efforts to become an expert at the traps. This rule should be strongly impressed upon every beginner, for the natural impulse is perhaps exactly the opposite, namely, to close one eye. Try it for yourself: Take a walking cane or a stick of wood and pretend that it is a gun; select some object to aim at, fix both eyes on the object and throw the stick to your shoulder as you would a gun. Don't you then close one eye and instinctively look along the stick to see if you *pointed right*? To be sure you do. And wasn't the stick pointing just right, too?

SHOOTING GLASSES.

If your eyes do not seem to focus well, or if you are not quite sure as to which eye of the two is the stronger, do not delay, but go to an oculist and let him tell what, if anything, is wrong. If necessary have glasses made to correct any defect, but above all, when having such glasses made for you, be sure to have them large enough, so that when your cheek is down on the stock and your eye is looking along the rib, you will not be looking over the top of the glasses.

Special shooting glasses are made by several concerns, and lenses suitable to any kind of freak sight can be had of several different colors—green, orange, pale blue, etc. The popular color among trap shooters seems to be on the order of an amber, and plain glasses of that color made for ordinary sight or according to some special formula are much worn and certainly do help to kill the glare, light on the gun barrel, etc. Their use is decidedly beneficial when the sun is exceptionally bright and there is snow on the ground, or when shooting over water.

We will tell you how to go about it. Before you buy a gun, ammunition, trap or anything else in that line, write this magazine for advice, which will be furnished gratis, and all questions will be answered willingly relative to trap or field shooting.

Shooters Need The AUTO-GLAS




SEE THAT HINGE

Pat.
May 2nd, 1911

The Only Comfortable Goggle

The Only Efficient Eye Protector

This glass was originally designed as a Shooter's Glass and is without question the only glass made that is suited to the shooter's requirements.

The hinged centerpiece which is the distinguishing feature of the Autoglas allows the lenses to conform to the curves of the face and excludes all dust, wind and flying particles.

The lenses are ground glass and curved in shape, ensuring comfort and perfect sight and allowing unobstructed vision in all directions.

Regularly supplied with Amber colored glass, but procurable in any color or tint desired.

For Sale by All Opticians, Motor Supply Houses and Sporting Goods Dealers

F. A. HARDY & CO. Dept. P CHICAGO, ILL.
Box 804

ONE TRIGGER ON *Ithaca* No. 4 \$15.00



Shoot trigger barrel first by touch of thumb

Infalible Single Trigger fitted to Ithaca No. 4 on any cheaper grade hammerless for \$15.00

It is the only single trigger we recommend and we have studied them for years.

Indicator is on top—you don't have to turn gun bottom side up to read or shift it

Get large catalog—double guns \$17.75 up. Single Trap guns \$85.00 up.

ITHACA GUN CO., Box 53, ITHACA N. Y.

RIDE a RANGER



1916 Model

bicycle and know you have the best. Buy a machine you can prove before accepting.

DELIVERED FREE ON APPROVAL and 30 days' trial. No expense to you if you do not wish to keep it.

LOW FACTORY COST, great improvements and values never before equalled in our 1916 models.

WRITE TODAY for our big catalog showing our complete line of 1916 bicycles, TIRES, sundries and parts, and learn the wonderful new offers and terms we will give you. Auto and Motorcycle Supplies at factory to user prices. Do not buy until you know what we can do for you.

MEAD CYCLE CO. DEPT. B-31, CHICAGO

NO JOKE TO BE DEAF



—Every Deaf Person Knows That.

I make myself hear after being deaf for 25 years, with these Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I got deaf and how I make myself hear. Address

Pat. Nov. 8, 1908

GEO. P. WAY, Artificial Ear Drum Co. (Inc.)
38 Adelaide St., Detroit, Mich.



THERE'S double the charm and pleasure in shooting when you have exactly the right gun. You buy the best when you buy a *Marlin*; and we want you to have exactly the right *Marlin* for your requirements. That's why we make

Marlin

Repeating Shotguns

—guns of famous shooting ability—in 12, 16 and 20 gauges, both hammer and hammerless types, in many grades and styles.

The standard 12's handle heavy trap and duck loads easily. The medium 16's and light-weight 20 bores are perfect for snipe, quail, partridge, woodcock, squirrels, rabbits, etc.—they handle fast and with wonderful precision.



Note the beauty of build and balance in this 5-shot 20-gauge *Marlin* repeater.

All *Marlin* hammerless guns have solid-top receiver, side ejection, matted barrel, take-down construction. The solid-steel-breech and safety devices make them the safest breech-loading guns built.

Select your gun now! Send 3 stamps postage today for our new 140-page catalog of repeating rifles and shotguns. It will help you select the right gun. Do it now!

The Marlin Firearms Co.
7 Willow Street New Haven, Conn.

Cork Tip or Plain End
15¢

MOGUL

EGYPTIAN CIGARETTES

"JUST LIKE BEING IN CAIRO"



Sinargyros
Makers of the Highest Grade Turkish and Egyptian Cigarettes in the World

Are You One of the Three Million Employed by the Railroads of the UNITED STATES and CANADA

Whether you are or not the

Railroad Man's Magazine

means a lot to you

One adult wage-earner in every ten in the United States and Canada makes his living by working directly for a railroad in some capacity. Millions of others earn their living by working for the great commerce which the railroads create. The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is devoted to the endless variety of interest that these millions of men and women represent. It is a big, satisfying magazine that vivifies the greatest industry in the world. Its fiction is packed with the punch of adventure and daring of the big steel highways. Its articles are instructively written to help men who are trying to help

themselves. In addition to twenty other features we publish a

Full Book Length Railroad Novel in Every Number

You get this big supply of good reading for fifteen cents. If railroad men can't get along without it, how can you? Try it once. You'll want it always. The RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is the most fascinating magazine in America

15 cents a copy — \$1.50 a year

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

8 WEST FORTIETH STREET, NEW YORK CITY

DIAMONDS

ON CREDIT 20% DOWN 10% A MONTH

The most beautiful Diamonds are the Blue-white, especially if absolutely perfect. **LYON DIAMONDS** are 1st Quality, Blue-white. A certificate furnished with every Diamond guaranteeing its value and providing for exchange at full purchase price. Goods sent prepaid for examination and approval. Write for Catalog No. 10, 10 per cent DISCOUNT FOR CASH (Est'd 1843) 71-73 Nassau St., NEW YORK.



In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.

FOR THE
SEPTEMBER NUMBER
OF
Munsey's Magazine

we have an unusually important literary event to announce—the appearance of a new novel by the famous author of “Clayhanger,” “Hilda Lessways,” “Buried Alive,” and “Milestones”—

These Twain

BY ARNOLD BENNETT

The hero and heroine of Mr. Bennett's new work are already familiar as the leading characters of two of his most popular and successful books, “Clayhanger” and “Hilda Lessways.” The earlier stories chronicled the youth and courtship of the man and woman whose names they bore; “These Twain” deals with their married life. It is, nevertheless, a novel complete in itself, and can be readily understood without knowledge of any other book.

Owing to the great length of “These Twain,” which contains as much as two full volumes of ordinary size, it is impossible to present it unabridged in a single issue of a magazine. It will therefore be published in two parts, the first in the September issue of THE MUNSEY, the second and concluding portion in the October number.

September issue on sale at all news-stands
on August 20th

Price 15 Cents

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY
8 West Fortieth Street, New York

TAILOR MADE TO ORDER 6 MONTHS TO PAY



Be the swellest dresser in your set. Wear clothes that virtually breathe class. Take six months to pay for them. Get acquainted with America's greatest price-smashing tailoring house. See how our tremendous buying power gives us the pick of the world's finest fabrics at lowest prices known. Our catalog will astound you. Write for it.

Save Half!

Think of it! **\$25 tailored-to-your-order Suits and Overcoats only \$15 from us; \$35 values only \$18, etc.** Don't buy ready-mades and pay double our price. Don't pay other tailors two or three times as much as we charge. Don't buy clothes that can't be guaranteed to the limit. We must make good clothes to uphold our reputation.

Only \$2.30 Per Month!

No need to sacrifice the advantage of made-to-order clothes. So easy to pay our way that you won't miss the money. We trust you. No references required. No red tape. No delay. No collectors. No extra charge for the credit. Absolutely rock-bottom prices.

BEWARE

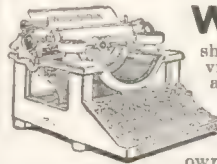
of the houses advertising “made-to-measure” clothes who don't dare to back up their claims. Don't be fooled into accepting altered-to-fit ready-mades as made-to-order clothes. Deal with the house that believes in quality and fairness.

\$1,000 Reward To anyone who proves that we do not make all our garments absolutely tailor-made to your own individual order and measurements. There's our sensational offer. Don't confuse us with the ordinary run of so-called tailoring houses. We're different. See our money-back guarantee in our catalog.

DeLuxe Book of Style FREE!

Just off the press—our wonderful Book of 1915 Fall and Winter Fashions. Most advanced and exclusive styles—the choicest designs from the world's greatest style centers. The cream of the greatest mills. Write for it today. Post card brings it free together with full particulars of the most sensational offer ever made in the history of high class tailoring. Write now!

STANLEY-ROGERS CO., 546 S. Clark St., Chicago, Ill.



WOULD YOU

show this standard high grade fully visible typewriter to your friends and let them see where in it excels any other \$100 typewriter, if by doing this and rendering other small assistance, you could easily earn one to keep as your own. Then by post card or letter

to us simply say “Mail Particulars.”

WOODSTOCK TYPEWRITER CO., Box 529, Woodstock, Ill.

Diamonds Watches on Credit

Pay a Little Each Month

Special Selection of Diamond-set Jewelry, at a great saving in price. Gorgeously beautiful Diamonds, perfect in cut and full of fiery brilliancy, set in solid gold or platinum mountings. CREDIT TERMS: One-fifth Down, balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly. We pay all delivery charges. If not entirely satisfactory in every way, return at our expense and your money will be promptly refunded. Or, if you prefer, we will send C. O. D. for your examination. You will be under no obligations to buy.

SEND FOR FREE 116-PAGE JEWELRY CATALOG

Over 2000 illustrations of the new styles in jewelry—rings, studs, scarf pins, ear-screws, brooches, bracelets, watch bracelets, watches, chains, silverware, etc. A **Diamond** is the best investment you can make. It constantly increases in value and lasts forever. Our Guarantee Certificate, given with every diamond we sell, is the strongest and broadest ever issued by a responsible house. Send for Catalog today. It tells about our easy credit plan.

LOFTIS BROS. & CO., National Credit Jewelers
Dept. D 847, 100 to 108 N. State St., CHICAGO, ILL.
(Established 1858) Stores also in: Pittsburgh; St. Louis; Omaha.

Anti-Kamnia

~FOR ALL PAIN~

HEADACHES NEURALGIA AND LA GRIPPE TABLETS



OF what value is a remedy for the whooping-cough unless that disease be present? You would never have much call for a yellow fever remedy in a country where that disease was unknown.

But tell us, where in the wide, wide world will you find a home unacquainted with pain?

Therefore, the whole world is our field; and wherever pain exists, there the pain-relieving Anti-Kamnia tablets should be.

The name itself suggests what Anti-Kamnia Tablets are and what the remedial characteristics are: Anti (*Greek, Anti,*) opposed to; Kamnia (*Greek, Kamnos*) pain—ergo, a remedy to relieve pain and suffering. For headaches and neuralgias of all descriptions; the nervous disturbance from excessive brain work; the insomnia, depression, and after-effects resulting from excesses in eating or drinking; the muscular aches, general malaise, frontal headaches and sneezing incident to severe colds; and in fact, for all

conditions in which pain is prominent, Anti-Kamnia tablets are unsurpassed.

In the pains of la grippe and its after-effects; in chills and fever, colds in the head; in sciatica, acute or chronic rheumatism and gout; in intermittent and malarial fevers; in bronchitis and pleurisy; in sleeplessness and worry—in all these affections where a remedy is needed to relieve pain, to quiet the nervous system or control the fever, Anti-Kamnia Tablets will be found superior to any other remedy.

When To Take Anti-Kamnia Tablets

As a Pain Reliever—In headache, migraine, corvza, la grippe and its after-effects.

As an Anodyne or Sedative In indigestion, gastralgia, dyspepsia, hysteria, insomnia, car-sickness, sea-sickness, worry and sight-seer's fatigue.

As an Antipyretic—In intermittent, puerperal and malarial fevers, bronchitis, pleurisy, etc.

As an Anti-Neuralgic In acute or chronic neuralgia, facial neuralgia, earache, pain about the teeth, and pains of sciatica.

As an Anti-Rheumatic—In acute or chronic rheumatism and gout, fever and pleurodynia.

They are particularly serviceable in relieving the persistent headache which accompanies nervousness. In the various neuralgias they are of peculiar service. Only the vivid picture of a crisis in nervous disorders or the agony of a true migraine, can impress the observer with the full value of this excellent Pain-Reliever.

All genuine Anti-Kamnia Tablets bear the AK monogram. At all druggists in any quantity desired. Ask for A-K Tablets.

THE GREAT PAIN RELIEVER.

Antikamnia Tablets

OPPOSED TO PAIN



KEEP THESE MEN!

"It Would Be Hard to Replace Them Because They Have Special Training"

WHEN your employer cuts down the pay roll it is the untrained men that go. His finger will sooner or later go down the pay-roll list on which your name appears. Are you one of the men whom he will hold? If you are not, I. C. S. training will keep you on the pay roll.

It makes no difference where you live, under what conditions you work, the I. C. S. will bring to you in your spare time, at a small cost, the kind of training that the employer values—the training that will qualify you for a more congenial position—the training that means advancement and a larger salary.

You can get this training. Mark and mail the coupon. We will tell you how thousands situated just as you are have risen to positions of trust and responsibility through I. C. S. training.

Make your employer say "Keep That Man" when he reaches your name.

Mark and Mail the Coupon TODAY

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 806 SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING | ☐ SALESMANSHIP |
| ☐ Electric Lighting & Railways | ☐ ADVERTISING |
| ☐ Telephone Expert | ☐ Window Trimming |
| ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEERING | ☐ Show Card Writing |
| ☐ Mechanical Drafting | ☐ Lettering and Sign Painting |
| ☐ Gas Engines | ☐ ILLUSTRATING |
| ☐ CIVIL ENGINEERING | ☐ Designing |
| ☐ Surveying and Mapping | ☐ BOOKKEEPING |
| ☐ MINE FOREMAN AND SUPT. | ☐ Stenography and Typewriting |
| ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEERING | ☐ Higher Accounting |
| ☐ ARCHITECTURE | ☐ Commercial Law |
| ☐ Building Contractor | ☐ GOOD ENGLISH FOR EVERYONE |
| ☐ Architectural Drafting | ☐ Teachers Course |
| ☐ Concrete Engineering | ☐ English Branches |
| ☐ Structural Engineering | ☐ CIVIL SERVICE |
| ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING | ☐ AGRICULTURE |
| ☐ AUTO RUNNING | ☐ POULTRY |
| ☐ Motor Boat Running | ☐ Chemistry |

- ☐ Spanish
☐ German
☐ French
☐ Italian

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

The Burlington Smashes

Mail the Coupon TODAY for Free WatchBook

All Watch Competition

Look!



19 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels—
Adjusted to the second—
Adjusted to temperature—
Adjusted to isochronism—
25-year gold strap case—

Genuine Montgomery Railroad Dial—

New Ideas in Thin Cases.

Every fighting vessel in the U. S. Navy has the Burlington Watch aboard. This includes every torpedo boat—every submarine as well as the big Dreadnoughts.

\$2.50
Only 2 A Month

And all of this for \$2.50—only \$2.50 per month—a great reduction in watch price—direct to you—positively the exact prices the wholesale dealer would have to pay. We do not care to quote these prices here, but write—write before you buy. Think of the high-grade, guaranteed watch we offer here at such a remarkable price. Indeed, the days of exorbitant watch prices have passed.

See It First!

You don't pay a cent to anybody until you see the watch. We won't let you buy a Burlington watch without seeing it. Look at the splendid beauty of the watch itself. Thin model, handsomely shaped—aristocratic in every line. Then look at the works! There you see the pinnacle of watchmaking. You understand how this wonder timepiece is adjusted to the very second!

Free Watch Book

Get the Burlington Watch Book by sending this coupon now. You will know a lot more about watch buying when you read it. You will be able to "steer clear" of the double-priced watches which are no better. Send coupon today for the book and our offer.

Burlington Watch Co.
19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Dept. 1076
Chicago

Name _____

Address _____

Free Watch Book Coupon

Burlington Watch Co.
19th St. & Marshall Blvd.
Dept. 1076 Chicago, Ill.

Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your cash or \$2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.



REMINGTON
UMC

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

REVOLVER and PISTOL CARTRIDGES

*Dependable
in Any Make of Arm*

MEN took to Revolver and Pistol Shooting as a sport. Got to thinking about it—comparing scores, methods, ammunition—and Remington-UMC business in Revolver and Pistol Cartridges grew by leaps and bounds.

It is growing faster than ever to-day. More men judging ammunition by its *results*—a keener scrutiny; more rigid standards; and a wider and wider understanding of just *why* Remington-UMC stands where it does in the estimation of Revolver and Pistol users all over the world, both the record makers and the rank and file.

Remington-UMC Cartridges are made for every standard make of pistol and revolver. Sold by alert dealers all over this country—the dealers who display the *Red Ball Mark of Remington-UMC*

REMINGTON ARMS-UNION METALLIC CARTRIDGE CO.
WOOLWORTH BLDG. (233 Broadway) NEW YORK CITY



"Each
morn a
thousand
Roses
brings"

— OMAR



OMAR

TURKISH BLEND
CIGARETTES

To blend *successfully* Turkish and domestic tobaccos in a cigarette requires the very greatest skill, experience and knowledge. Otherwise, the blend is rough and catches the throat. The delicious *smoothness* and mildness of OMAR permit all-day-long enjoyment — for this one *perfect* blend of Turkish and American tobaccos makes OMAR the most delightfully refreshing smoke in the world.

Sinopi, Ephesus, Ismi and Serres, yield this richest store of fragrant Turkish leaf to OMAR. The mellowest tobaccos from our own sunny Southland give life, snap and sparkle to the blend. All the enjoyable qualities of Turkish and blended cigarettes are united in OMAR, with the *distinctive* zest and *relish*, that its own wonderful blend gives to OMAR alone.



Logan & Myers Tobacco Co.



*Distinctively
Individual—
Anywhere*

FATIMA

The Turkish Blend Cigarette